VARIATIONS ON A THEME: THE MONOMYTH
IN JOHN FOWLES'S THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN
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THESIS

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This study analyzes the development of the major characters in Fowles's novel - Charles, Sarah, and Sam - in terms of the heroic quest motif. Using the basic pattern of the heroic quest, the monomyth, that Joseph Campbell sets forth in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, I attempt to show that Fowles's novel may best be understood as the story of three separate heroic quests whose paths cross rather than as the story of a single hero or heroine. This reading seems to account best for all elements of the novel and to explain best the final positions of the characters in question as well as providing a rich appreciation of the novel's wealth of imagery.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  FOWLES AND MYTH-MAKING</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. DEPARTURE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. INITIATION</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undercliff--First Meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undercliff--Sarah's Story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undercliff--Last Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. RETURN</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCE LIST</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I said earlier that we are all poets, though not many of us write poetry; and so are we all novelists, that is, we have a habit of writing fictional futures for ourselves, although perhaps today we incline more to put ourselves into a film. We screen in our minds hypotheses about how we might behave, about what might happen to us; and these novelistic or cinematic hypotheses often have very much more effect on how we actually do behave, when the real future becomes the present, than we generally allow. (Fowles 350)

If Fowles's general principle is true—that we each invent a fictional future for ourselves—it is equally true that we each fictionalize our past, editing out what we dislike, interpreting and selecting the events of our lives to create neat causal chains and explain ourselves to ourselves. We justify and legitimate our present and our future hopes and dreams on the basis of our past, our view of which is colored by our present and our future plans. The same is true, on a larger scale, of civilizations. We explain, define, justify, rationalize, our present philosophical
position by pointing, in agreement with or reaction to, the past, a past that each era, to a greater or lesser degree, re-interprets. We see the past through "present-colored" glasses, with 20-20 (or 20-30 or 40 or with bifocals, etc.) hindsight, so to speak. Thus, we explain our position in the world, why we are who we are, how we fit into the scheme of things, even why we engage in the social rituals we engage in. In short, we are mythmakers. We invent fictionalized stories to explain our position in the world, our relationship to God, our reason for being. We explain ourselves to ourselves. We create only distorted versions of the truth, but to create myths, to attempt to understand ourselves, is as natural as breathing.

This process of mythmaking is what Fowles has engaged in in creating *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. He has devised a Victorian England and its people, as fictional in their way as any fantasy or science fiction, to serve a purpose, to build a myth. In all his fiction Fowles has a philosophical model to build, an idea he wishes to communicate, a mythology to promulgate, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is pre-eminently the book about the history of that idea. The story of Charles Smithson and Sarah Woodruff is the myth of the origin of Fowles's brand of existentialism, the story of the genesis of philosophical modernism as Fowles sees it in the application of Darwinian
evolutionary theory to everything in sight, like the epoxy in a model airplane. And like that epoxy, it certainly sticks things together, though whether they are stuck in the right places to make the model fly is another question. That the novel is the story of the birth of an existentialist has been remarked upon many times. Richard Costa comments on Fowles's "originality of impulse [in] . . . showing his Victorian hero's growth into what we in our time take as an article of faith, our exclusive claim on what, for want of better words, I shall call the existential temper" (3). Elizabeth Rankin called The French Lieutenant's Woman "a novel about the evolution of an existentialist" (197). Charles Scruggs remarks that "Fowles is interested in how the Victorian world evolved into the modern one . . ." (98).

Fowles himself admits his intention—"'My two previous novels were both based on more or less disguised existential premises. I want this one to be no exception'" (Fowles, "Notes on an Unfinished Novel," quoted in Woodcock 92). Fowles writes to prove a theory about his philosophical origins, and produces a good, if flawed, story in the process. What is more interesting than his theory, though, is the way he goes about presenting it—his mythmaking.

Many people who have written about The French Lieutenant's Woman connect it with myth. Patrick Brantlinger says,
Under the guise of an interpretation of the Victorian age, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is really a myth for now. One might call this the myth of the overthrow of 'Victorianism,' entailing the ritual exorcism of Duty and work and Chastity.

Deborah Guth, comparing Fowles's work to Alain Fournier's *Le Grand Meulnes*, remarks that,

both focus on the juxtaposition of two distinct worlds--the so-called 'real' world of ordinary experience in which the tale begins, and a pastoral dream-like landscape on the fringe of [an]other, in which strange events take place that will radically alter the protagonist's destiny.

Guth labels the dream-like landscape a "mythical realm" (246). Robert Huffaker, among others, connects the novel with the myth that post-Freudian man has built around the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve (110). In addition, echoes of myth throughout the story are inescapable; it is a story filled figuratively with sirens, Greek temples, Edenic imagery, Quest motifs. More importantly, at bottom, the stories of Charles and Sarah follow the age-old pattern of the heroic myths. To build his myth Fowles has used the skeleton of other myths. Perhaps fittingly, Fowles has used the pattern of ancient myth, in realistic rather than fantastic dress, as the outline of the stories of Charles
Smithson and Sarah Woodruff. Tracing this pattern through the story, examining the way it informs everything from the actions and thoughts of the characters to the imagery of the narrator, provides an interpretation of the novel that takes into account and clarifies its several layers of meaning, giving a view of many facets of the story at once.

In order to trace a pattern, we must, of course, first know the pattern. Fortunately, in his study _The Hero with a Thousand Faces_, Joseph Campbell has provided just the tool we need. For this book, Campbell has gathered heroic myths from many cultures which he analyzes and compares and so derives a basic pattern that is common to all heroic myths. This pattern, what Campbell calls the monomyth, may be simply stated:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow men. (30)

In the myths the world of common day is the everyday world that man inhabits. The supernatural region is often the underworld or the sea or a tangled jungle; it is a place where chaos reigns instead of order, a wilderness. Campbell further associates the world of common day with the conscious mind. Thus, the heroic quest may be understood as
a voyage of self-discovery and growth, because on one level it is a journey into the unconscious mind. Campbell asserts that everyone lives out a part or all of this journey as he passes from childhood into maturity, and remarks that, in fact, most societies, ancient and modern, have certain "rites of passage" symbolic of this myth of the hero's journey.

The tribal ceremonies of birth, initiation, marriage, burial, installation, and so forth, serve to translate the individual's life-crises and life-deeds into classic, impersonal forms. They disclose him to himself, not as this personality or that, but as the warrior, the bride, the widow, the priest, the chieftain; at the same time rehearsing for the rest of the community the old lesson of the archetypal stages . . . Social duties continue the lesson of the festival into normal, everyday existence, and the individual is validated still. (383)

Fowles's premise in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is that all of this is as true for modern societies as it was for ancient tribes. The forms of the ceremonies and rituals change, but their purpose remains the same. Thus, most individuals live out their heroic journeys within the context of what we can call a social cult, a framework of special ceremonies and everyday duties in which each person
plays a specific role defined by and defining the particular ceremonies and duties to be performed. A society more strictly governed by duties and ceremonies than Fowles's Victorian England would be difficult to find.

Yet, Campbell tells us, there is another way for the individual to find heroic significance, a way

---in diametric opposition to that of social duty and the popular cult. From the standpoint of the way of duty, anyone in exile from the community is a nothing. From the other point of view, however, this exile is the first step of the quest. (385)

Some people, then, rebel against the social cult and seek a solitary road to heroism. As Campbell says, their social counterparts regard these rebels as non-entities at best. Indeed, to those safely within the mold of the social cult, a person who deliberately cuts himself off from the system, who ventures into the unknown region alone, without the protecting forms of social convention, seeking an unknown boon not prescribed by the societal pattern, may seem quite mad. The solitary hero goes through the same pattern, lives out the same steps, as the societal hero; he merely covers ground not recognized by society and returns with a boon unfamiliar to convention. **The French Lieutenant's Woman** is the story of two such solitary heroic journeys that become entangled and finally, inevitably, disentangled. Though
they help one another to progress along the way, mistake one another for the boon they travel toward, even gain, in the end, the same boon, Charles and Sarah live out sequences of events that are best understood as distinct from one another, two separate though parallel paths.

Following Campbell's lead, I will divide my examination of the two journeys into three major chapters: Departure, Initiation, and Return, and in each chapter I will discuss the various steps belonging to that section of the journey as they arise. Because the Initiation chapter is by far the longest, I have divided it into smaller sections of events that form convenient groups. I will attempt to follow the journeys of Charles and Sarah simultaneously, with a short digression on the subject of a third heroic journey in the story, that of Sam, forming a section of the Initiation chapter.
CHAPTER II

DEPARTURE

The hero's departure on his quest actually begins long before the moment he steps outside the social cult, in his childhood. The journey begins with the shaping of the hero's identity and character, which determine his fitness for the heroic quest. Campbell has said that

The composite hero [or heroine] of the monomyth is a personage of exceptional gifts. Frequently he is honored by his society, frequently unrecognized or disdained. He and/or the world in which he finds himself suffers from a symbolic deficiency. (37)

Because Sarah sets forth on her journey first in order of time, in fact some time before Charles arrives in Lyme and meets her and so before the chronological beginning of the novel, we will consider her first. We can reconstruct the events of her life and her basic character from the general information supplied by the narrator and by Sarah herself.

From the narrator we learn that Sarah is, rather like Hardy's Tess Durbeyfield, descended from a family that has fallen on hard times but that was once clearly a family of gentlemen. Fowles remarks, "There was once even a remote relationship with the Drake family, an irrelevant fact that
had petrified gradually over the years into the assumption of a direct lineal descent from the great Sir Francis" (62). So Sarah is of an honorable heritage. Furthermore, her father, driven by an obsession with this heritage, sends her to boarding school, thus educating her beyond her station in life. Sarah is also possessed of a very special sort of intelligence, "an uncanny--uncanny in one who had never been to London, never mixed with the world--ability to classify other people's worth: to understand them, in the fullest sense of that word" (Fowles 61). "Without being able to say how, . . . she saw [people] as they were and not as they tried to seem" (Fowles 61). She has read a great deal of fiction and poetry, and so

They served as a substitute for experience. Without realizing it she judged people as much by the standards of Walter Scott and Jane Austen as by any empirically arrived at; seeing those around her as fictional characters, and making poetic judgements on them. (Fowles 62)

Clearly, Sarah is not an average person; even her name, which means "princess," marks her as exceptional.

However, her gifts--her education and her instinctive insight into people--are also her curses, for they serve only to point out what she lacks, the deficiencies that prevent her from participating in the social cult at the level she would like.
Given the veneer of a lady, she was made the perfect victim of a caste society. Her father had forced her out of her own class, but could not raise her to the next. To the young men of the one she had left she had become too select to marry; to those of the one she aspired to, she remained too banal. (Fowles 62)

Even her father disdains her after her return from school because she no longer fits in. Thus, Sarah is a good example of the heroine Campbell describes; she possesses exceptional gifts which are unrecognized and which also form her social deficiencies.

Attempting to find some niche in the social cult, Sarah takes a position as a governess with the Talbots, where she is daily reminded of her exclusion from the position to which she aspires and particularly from the accompaniments to that position, love, marriage, and children, all of which Mrs. Talbot, who is exactly Sarah's age, is happy in. All of the aspects of her life that unfit her for conventional participation in the social heroic cult are hints that Sarah is meant to follow the road of the solitary hero. By the time Varguennes arrives at the Talbot's, Sarah is on the brink of departure. As Campbell remarks, "The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passage of a threshold is at hand" (51). Varguennes functions as the herald of the Call to Adventure. Sarah admires him from the
first; "in these adventures there is an atmosphere of irresistible fascination about the figure that appears suddenly as guide, marking a new period, a new stage, in the biography" (Campbell 55). What Sarah hopes to find with Varguennes is the happiness she has hitherto been denied: love, marriage, children. She sees Varguennes as a gentleman, feels that here, at last, is her opportunity to fulfill her dream. She follows him to Weymouth.

The various versions of her story that we hear, from the townspeople and from Sarah herself, all agree in basic outline up to this point. The ending of the story varies depending on the object of the teller. And in this fact we can see an interesting point about storytelling in general. Throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the stories told by various characters, especially Sarah, always serve a specific purpose; they are designed to perform a particular function for the benefit of the characters telling them. Furthermore, they serve also by provoking reactions, especially in Charles, to advance the heroic quests of the protagonists, Charles and Sarah. Their stories are advanced by stories in a way similar to that by which Campbell sees the stories of myth as helping to advance the heroic quests of everyday men and women. Thus, Ernestina expresses the disapprobation of Public Opinion regarding Sarah's behavior. Sarah has done something "worse than" falling in love with Varguennes (Fowles 25). Her remarks to Charles seem to show
her desire to quell Charles's interest and close the subject as quickly as possible though, of course, they produce the opposite effect in Charles, piquing his interest and exacerbating his frustration with social constraints. The vicar explains to Mrs. Poulteney that Sarah stayed with a female cousin in Weymouth in order to persuade that self-righteously redoubtable lady to take Sarah in. Both Ernestina's and the vicar's version insist that Sarah now waits for the Frenchman's return as an explanation of her habit of staring out to sea, an explanation which Sarah later refutes when she tells Charles that she knows Varguennes will never return because he is married. A little later the narrator coyly informs us that "the simple fact of the matter [is] that she had not lodged with a female cousin at Weymouth" (Fowles 62), encouraging curiosity in his readers. Charles, after seeing her asleep on the Undercliff, decides that he "could have believed many things of that sleeping face; but never that its owner was a whore" (Fowles 95). Thus, by this time, even Charles has half begun constructing an ending for her tale that satisfies him personally.

Sarah's own first version of the story is that she went to Weymouth to the inn Varguennes told her of. From there she was directed to another inn, "not a respectable place" (Fowles 182). She realized that Varguennes was not a gentleman, yet she remained and "gave [her]self to him"
We learn later, of course, that this is a lie, but again, each version of the story has a purpose. An examination of Charles's reaction to her story makes her purpose clear.

He saw [her] cheeks were wet [with tears], and he felt unbearably touched; disturbed; beset by a maze of crosscurrents and swept hopelessly away from his safe anchorage of judicial, and judicious, sympathy. He saw the scene she had not detailed: her giving herself. He was at one and the same time Varguennes enjoying her and the man who sprang forward and struck him down; just as Sarah was to him both an innocent victim and a wild, abandoned woman. Deep in himself he forgave her her unchastity; and glimpsed the dark shadows where he might have enjoyed it himself. (Fowles 186)

Her aim, as we learn later, is to cause Charles to fall in love with her, and certainly he is well on the road to doing so by now.

At Exeter, Sarah admits that she has been deceiving him about her past. She tells him that when she arrived at Weymouth, she saw Varguennes come out of the inn "'With a woman. The kind of woman one cannot mistake,'" so she "'drew into a doorway. When they had gone, [she] walked away'" (Fowles 366). This, of course, is the true version of what happened at Weymouth; Charles's shirt is stained with proof positive of it. The remainder of the tale she has
told earlier on the Undercliff, about the letter from Varguennes saying he is married and her reply, may well be true; in any case, the fact of his marriage has served her purpose by letting Charles know early on that she does not consider herself attached to Varguennes in any way.

Thus, the true sequence of events after Sarah left for Weymouth is that upon her arrival she saw Varguennes with a prostitute, did not make her presence known to him, and returned to Lyme, where later she received a letter from him telling of his unhappy marriage and talking of divorce, to which she replied assuring him she felt no further attachment to him. However, she has allowed the people of Lyme to think what they will of her, encouraging by her behavior the tendency of Public Opinion to assume the worst. The several versions of her story that Sarah successively tells indicate her propensity for manipulating people by fictionalizing reality, a tendency that follows from her habit of seeing reality as fictional. It is not accidental that she reminds Charles of Emma Bovary.

Her reason for deceiving Charles is clear. The only available explanation for her deceiving Lyme is what she tells Charles on the Undercliff. At that point she has told him that she gave in to Varguennes, and she is explaining her reasons for that, but the feeling and intentions she describes are no less suitable an explanation of the true
situation, as we see in the following passage in which she is talking to Charles:

"I did it so that I should never be the same again. I did it so that people should point at me, should say, there walks the French Lieutenant's Whore--oh yes, let the word be said. So that they should know I have suffered, and suffer, as others suffer in every town and village in this land. I could not marry that man. So I married shame. I do not mean that I knew what I did... It was a kind of suicide... I know it was wicked... blasphemous, but I knew no other way to break out of what I was. If I had left that room and returned to Mrs. Talbot's, and resumed my former existence, I know that by now I should be dead... and by my own hand. What has kept me alive is my shame, my knowing that I am truly not like other women. I shall never have children, a husband, and those innocent happinesses they have. And they will never understand the reason for my crime!" (Fowles 185)

Consciously, then, she has chosen exile. She has crossed what Campbell calls the First Threshold, guided by Varguennes as the herald of her destiny into an unknown region. In myth this unknown region is the opposite of the world of common day. It is night; the Underworld; chaos; the world of dreams; wild, untamed places like the sea or dense forest into which the hero journeys in order to find
some boon. Sarah's movement into this unknown region begins with her meeting Varguennes and eventually ending up with Mrs. Poulteney. Interestingly, despite the fact that Mrs. Poulteney is the "epitome of all the most crassly arrogant traits of the ascendant British Empire" (Fowles 28), a kind of living symbol of her society's heroic cult, her kitchen is described as a "Stygian domain" (Fowles 27), and her gardens are "a positive forest of humane man-traps" (Fowles 28), while Mrs. Poulteney herself is an opium addict. Mrs. Poulteney's house is a nightmare version of the social restrictions placed upon the monomythic hero. While living in this house Sarah first begins to identify what is to be her boon. At Mrs. Poulteney's house Sarah begins to value her freedom, and precisely because she is at first deprived of it. After she has been there only a short time, she becomes ill, and Dr. Grogan's prescription is "more fresh air and freedom" (Fowles 68). That freedom is essential to her physical well-being is thus brought forcibly home to her.

Even when granted the greater freedom demanded by Dr. Grogan, Sarah is forbidden to stand on the Cobb and stare at the sea, and when Mrs. Fairley, who watches her constantly, reports that Sarah has been walking on Ware Commons, she is forbidden to go there too. This final restriction Sarah disregards, but for taking precautions to avoid being seen, and, as she points out, she can see the sea from the Commons
as well as on the Cobb. The nature of the two forbidden places is significant. The sea, wild, unrestrained, chaotic, and the Undercliff on Ware Commons, "an English Garden of Eden" (Fowles 76), densely green and tangled, are both symbolic of the night of the unknown and freedom from the constraints of society. The Undercliff is very steep. . . . But this steepness in effect tilts it, and its vegetation, towards the sun; and it is this fact together with the water from the countless springs that have caused the erosion, that lends the area its botanical strangeness--its wild arbutus and ilex and other trees rarely seen growing in England; its enormous ashes and beeches; its green Brazilian chasms choked with ivy and the liana of wild clematis; its bracken that grows seven, eight feet tall; its flowers that bloom a month earlier than anywhere else in the district. In summer it is the nearest this country can offer to a tropical jungle. It has also, like all land that has never been worked or lived on by man, its mysteries, its shadows, its dangers. . . . (Fowles 76)

And Ware Commons, with its "de facto Lover's Lane" and its Midsummer solstice celebrations (Fowles 99), is, to Fowles's Victorians, practically Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, in her retreat from society, Sarah goes further and further into the unknown region, finally retiring into the land of dreams when she falls asleep on the Undercliff.
Her physical retreat into the unknown is matched by a psychological retreat. Before she goes to Weymouth, she has an accepted part in society, though it is not a satisfying one. After her return, she is an exile, barred from participation in society's quest for heroism. She is outside the pale of respectable society; her social role no longer defines her and prescribes her behavior. Furthermore, as we have seen, this exile is deliberate. True to her habit of fictionalizing reality, she has created a role for herself. She sees herself as a living reproach to society, a constant reminder to Lyme of the suffering she feels has been inflicted on her. That her message is universally misinterpreted by society is, perhaps, significant, for the boon Sarah is to gain is personal, for her alone. By the time Charles enters the picture, she appears to have at least a dim perception of what it is. She says,

"Sometimes I almost pity them [other women]. I think I have a freedom they cannot understand. No insult, no blame can touch me. Because I have set myself beyond the pale." (Fowles 185)

As we have seen, freedom is her boon, and in her isolation she is learning to appreciate it, though at this point her freedom is created and fictional rather than real. Furthermore, she is far from recognizing the value of this boon, as her involvement with Charles indicates. For, as with Varguennes, Sarah has become involved with Charles
because she sees in him the visionary possibility of a place in the social cult, the possibility of marriage, children, a home, the traditional social role of the woman in the class to which she aspires. This is clear from her words to him at Exeter, "'You have given me the consolation of believing that in another world, another life, I might have been your wife'" (Fowles 366). Her relationships with Charles and with Varguennes mirror each other, the one difference being that whereas with Varguennes Sarah was the one enchanted and deceived, with Charles she is the enchanter and deceiver, and Charles is taken in.

Like Varguennes, Charles is a gentleman essentially trapped in Lyme. Varguennes is married; Charles is engaged. Charles interests himself in Sarah because she seems helpless, isolated, friendless, and because she is fascinating. Sarah helps Varguennes for the same reasons. Of her conversation with Varguennes Sarah says she felt them to be rather unreal, and because they were in French, she says that "'Very often I did not comprehend perfectly what he was saying'" (Fowles 179) although she does know that he is making "advances." Similarly, Charles perceives his meetings with Sarah on the Undercliff as occurring in an unreal place, a time that no longer exists, as evidenced by his frequent association of the place with Eden or ancient Greece. When she tells him her story there, he understands "very imperfectly" (Fowles 185), and he suspects her several
times of flirting with him, most notably when she smiles, but also when she proceeds him up the cliff, showing her pantalettes, and in the way she contrives always to show her beautiful hair. As she followed Verguennes to Weymouth, Charles follows her to Exeter, and the night there parallels and reverses the night at Weymouth. In both cases deception is exposed.

Having brought Sarah's story up to the time when she meets Charles, we must now turn our attention to Charles before we can examine how their two stories entwine.

As many critics have remarked, Charles is the real hero of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, for though Sarah's story can be reconstructed and we do follow her, it is only because we are involved with Charles's story that we hear of Sarah's. As with Sarah, we must begin with who Charles is. Like Sarah, he is from the first markedly different from other members of his class. We are told that his uncle, a typical English country gentleman, finds Charles quite puzzling. The young man has "an unnatural fondness for walking instead of riding" and "a sinister fondness for spending the afternoons at Winsyatt in the library, a room his uncle seldom if ever used" (Fowles 21). Furthermore, "At Cambridge . . . he had (unlike most young men of his time) actually begun to learn something" (Fowles 21). Charles is "an interesting young man. His travels abroad had regretfully rubbed away some of that patina of profound
humorlessness . . . one really required of a proper English gentleman of the time" (Fowles 24). He is intelligent and has "always asked life too many questions" (Fowles 18). Despite his marked distinction from his class, however, Charles is paradoxically dedicated to the typical values of his age, and never more so than at the point in his life at which we find him. At thirty-two years of age, Charles, the dutiful nephew of a baronet, is dutifully engaged to a suitably endowed heiress and dutifully dancing attendance on her at Lyme. Like Sarah, he is pursuing socially approved goals despite the fact that he is marked as a solitary hero figure. Charles also has his deficiencies. He is lazy, and, therefore, though he is interested in exploring many subjects, he is primarily a dilettante. "Toying with ideas [is] his chief occupation . . ." (Fowles 22). Like Sarah, Charles is marked for adventure, an everyman figure, as his name, meaning simply "man," suggests.

Of the beginning of adventures Campbell remarks, "A blunder--apparently the merest chance--reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood" (51). This is a perfect description of Charles's first encounter with Sarah. "The merest chance" does, indeed, bring them together, yet Charles is fascinated by Sarah, "the figure that appears suddenly as a guide" (Campbell 55), and "what formerly was meaningful . . . [becomes] strangely
emptied of value" (Campbell 55). After seeing the herald, Campbell says, "even though the hero returns for a while to his familiar occupations, they may be found unfruitful" (56).

Thus, Charles, after inquiring curiously about the black figure on the Cobb, feeling drawn to it, feeling protective of it, resumes his normal activities. Not, however, before a challenge has been issued, for, when he steps forward to warn her of the danger of her position, Sarah looks at him:

It was certainly not a beautiful face by any period's standards or taste. But it was an unforgettable face, and a tragic face. Its sorrow welled out of it as purely, naturally and unstoppably as water out of a woodland spring. There was no artifice there, no hypocrisy, no hysteria, no mask; and, above all, no sign of madness. The madness was in the empty sea, the empty horizon, the lack of reason for such sorrow; as if the spring was natural in itself, but unnatural in welling from a desert. (Fowles 16)

From the first, then, she intrigues him. That he feels challenged by her look is revealed in his analysis of it. Her expression is "unforgettable" to him. Though he, significantly, rejects the possibility of her being mad that Ernestina advances as society's opinion, he does see
her sorrow as misplaced. Some explanation other than
madness must account for the anomaly he perceives. He is
curious, challenged to find the explanation. Although, as
remarked, Charles returns to everyday activities--lunch at
Aunt Tranter's with Ernestina--when he later returns to his
hotel, he finds himself vaguely concerned about the status
quo of his existence. He feels

a sentiment of obscure defeat not in any way
related to the incident on the Cobb, but to
certain things he had said at Aunt Tranter's
lunch, to certain characteristic evasions he had
made; to whether his interest in paleontology was
a sufficient use for his natural abilities; to
whether Ernestina would ever really understand him
as well as he understood her; to a general senti-
ment of dislocated purpose . . . . (Fowles 18)

He attributes his feeling to the "threat of a long and now
wet afternoon to pass" (Fowles 18), yet these same unsatis-
fied, nagging doubts recur to him throughout his story up
until his epiphany in the church at Exeter. He questions
whether the life he has planned for himself, following the
accepted pattern of society, is satisfactory for him. His
adventure has begun.

Unlike Sarah, Charles begins his journey questioning
the social cult, wondering if its rewards are enough for
him, and his progress can be measured at least partly by the
amount of frustration and uncertainty built up in his mind as he confronts the prospect of marrying Ernestina. For Charles's boon, like Sarah's, is freedom. Like Sarah, Charles's first move in the unknown region is into an environment more restrictive than the one he is used to, a nightmarish microcosm of the restrictiveness of his normal London habitat in which he is poked and prodded by domineering old ladies and regarded primarily in the light of a social counter. For despite the fact that Lyme is an outwardly more charming place than Mrs. Poulteney's house, it curbs Charles's freedom as the house does Sarah's. Ernestina emphasizes this fact in the opening scene. When Charles remarks that her sense of propriety has become extremely delicate, she tells him, "We are not in London now" (Fowles 12), implying that what might have been acceptable behavior in the capital is not so in the provinces. Indeed, in some ways Ernestina is as much a guardian of what is proper as Mrs. Poulteney is. She likewise restricts Charles's freedom: "It was still strange to him to find that his mornings were not his own; that the plans of an afternoon might have to be sacrificed to some whim of Tina's" (Fowles 122). Thus, at Lyme Charles is in a situation analogous to Sarah's at Marlborough House, though not so harsh. Also like Sarah, Charles infrequently escapes to the Eden-like wilderness of the Undercliff, where he becomes ever more deeply involved with Sarah. This
alternation between the two environments and the women associated with them is a gradual learning process for Charles. More specifically, as he comes to know Sarah better, he begins to examine his own life and the social cult he has lived by and to find both lacking. Campbell states,

Woman, in the picture language of mythology represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know. As he progresses in the slow initiation which is life, the form of the goddess [incarnate in every woman] undergoes for him a series of transfigurations: she can never be greater than himself, though she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending. She lures, she guides, she bids him burst his fetters. (116)

This identification of every woman with the goddess is explicit for nearly all the women in The French Lieutenant's Woman. Mrs. Poulteney is likened to "some pagan idol . . . oblivious of the blood sacrifice her pitiless stone face demanded" (Fowles 102), while even the London prostitute Charles goes to is described as "the Pygmalion myth brought to a happy end" (Fowles 325). At one point, Mary, coming into Ernestina's room with flowers from Charles, is called a "vision of Flora" (Fowles 84), the Norse goddess of spring. So long as he pursues the social hero cult, Charles's
version of the goddess is Ernestina. On being shown into Aunt Tranter's back drawing room where Ernestina waits, for example, he says, "'I feel like an Irish navigator transported into a queen's boudoir'" (Fowles 97), and later she is called "a sugar Aphrodite" (Fowles 271). Sarah is, of course, the most significant version of the goddess in Charles's life. She is explicitly called a Calypso and a siren (Fowles 152) though her identity as the goddess is certainly clear enough from her actions toward Charles: she lures, she guides, she bids him burst his fetters, and she undergoes a series of transfigurations, for at each of their meetings Sarah shows to Charles a new aspect of her personality. His concept of who she is is revised with each meeting, and his reactions to her along with his corresponding reactions to the social cult help to indicate his progress toward his boon.

Sarah's progress is more difficult to gauge since we are not allowed access to her thoughts. Furthermore, Sarah's conscious object in luring Charles on is to win for herself a place in the social cult, an object diametrically opposed to the actual boon to be granted to her--freedom from the cult. So while she is unconsciously functioning as the goddess for Charles, she is consciously playing a role to entrap him. She creates herself as she goes, controlling the settings of their meetings and the role Charles plays so
that a careful examination of the scenes she creates, the way she manipulates Charles, can show much about Sarah herself and the progress of her journey.

Thus, to chart the further course of their entwined journeys, we must explore in detail their several meetings and Charles's subsequent responses to them.
CHAPTER III

INITIATION

Undercliff--First Meetings

Once the hero has responded to the Call to Adventure and set forth into the unknown realm, he has embarked on the most difficult and lengthy portion of his journey--initiation. In this phase, Campbell says, "the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials" of which the ultimate test is the Meeting with the Goddess (or the god as the case may be). This meeting is a final test of the hero's growth. The goddess has two faces, two sides of her personality--a positive one and a negative one, the virgin and the temptress--rather as we have seen with Mrs. Poulteney and, say, Mary. The hero must accept both sides (Campbell 111-126). Therein lies the test. For Charles and Sarah, the road of Trials and the Meeting with the Goddess are combined. Their several encounters are a series of trials, each of which is an aspect of the ultimate trial. Each trial is a fragment of the Meeting with the Goddess.¹ Thus, as we have already remarked, the meetings are the key.

The first meeting on the Cobb we have seen already. The second occurs the very next day, a day marked as special from its dawn.
A dozen times or so a year the climate of the mild Dorset coast yields such days—not just agreeably mild out-of-season days, but ravishing fragments of Mediterranean warmth and luminosity. Nature goes a little mad then. Spiders that should be hibernating run over the baking November rocks; blackbirds sing in December, primroses rush out in January; and March mimics June. (Fowles 47)

The very rarity and beauty of the day and the imagery describing it—"morning flood[ing] in like paradise," Nature gone "a little mad" (Fowles 47)—set the tone for the meeting in the Edenic setting of the Undercliff. Things are a bit out of control, a feeling intensified by Charles's unanticipated holiday from Ernestina and the social round occasioned by that young lady's indisposition. Before he leaves to hunt fossils, Charles is again pricked by his feeling of discontent. Looking at his face in a mirror he finds it "Too innocent a face, when it was stripped of its formal outdoor mask; too little achieved" (Fowles 50). In this frame of mind and on such a day he goes looking—for fossils.

As he moves away from Lyme along the beach, he gradually undergoes a change. His thoughts at first are decidedly scientific in character, a known, controlled realm for Charles. He contemplates the world around him from the smug security of his Darwinian understanding of it all,
although Charles does not understand Darwin very well at this point. His attitude alters, shifting into less controlled, less well-known areas, here as throughout the story, in fits and starts, beginning with his going wading after carefully checking to see that he is alone. He reverts to science with the finding of the ammonite fossil, then out of it in his decision to give the fossil to Ernestina, and back to it when he realizes the time. Interestingly, the sea, in the form of the rising tide, forces him into the Undercliff, for though he meant to explore a bit of it along a particular path, he had been planning to return along the beach. Now he must find his way back to town through the "English Garden of Eden." Nature itself seems conspiring to send him into the unknown.

Once having climbed the path, Charles tried to look seriously around him, but the little slope on which he found himself, the prospect before him, the sounds, the scents, the unalloyed wildness of growth and burgeoning fertility, forced him into anti-science. (Fowles 77)

Another swing back to science sends him searching for his "elusive echinoderms" until he again notices the time, and in his attempts to find his way back to Lyme, he stumbles upon the sleeping Sarah.
He stood unable to do anything but stare down, tranced by the unexpected encounter, and overcome by an equally strange feeling—not sexual, but fraternal, perhaps paternal, a certainty of the innocence of this creature, of her being unfairly outcast, and which was in turn a factor of her appalling loneliness. He could not imagine what, besides despair, could drive her, in an age where women were semistatic, timid, incapable of sustained physical effort, to this wild place. (Fowles 80)

The sight of her casts a spell over Charles; he is "tranced," and finds himself challenging society's judgement of her. His certainty of her innocence is an intuitive one, sprung from the irrational side of his mind rather than the rational. At this point, his feelings toward her are brotherly and protective though with a distinct sexual undertone since she reminds him of foreign women with whom he has had affairs. Furthermore, his present ideas of women do not allow him to understand her, a significant point since she represents knowledge and, in light of the fact that he feels discontented because he understands Ernestina far better than she does him. When Sarah awakens, of course, he snaps back into propriety so that throughout this second meeting Charles wavers between fascination and his "sense of what [is] proper" (Fowles 81). His sudden sympathy with her
arises out of the uncontrollable, irrational part of his mind, and this and his fascination with her are direct contraventions of society's attitudes.

As for Sarah, Charles notices that her face in sleep lacks the sadness he perceived before. In the profound retreat from society of sleep, Sarah appears content. When she wakes, she regards Charles "with a look of shock and bewilderment, perhaps not untinged with shame" (Fowles 80). Here as on the Cobb, Charles is an intruder, even more so here, where people ordinarily do not come, for her position on the Cobb is a staged one, designed to be seen, while this moment is uncontrolled, a spontaneous meeting, one of only very few such in the entire story. As such it is significant, a signal that what happens between them is not all of Sarah's contrivance or even within her control. Thus, though her later manipulation of him is an attempt to gratify Sarah's wrong-headed desire to take part in the social cult, this surprise meeting confirms the fact that their relationship is a necessary part of the progress of both towards their goal.

While this spontaneous meeting in its wild, natural setting is taking place, Ernestina is reflecting on Charles's proposal of marriage to her, and the contrast between these two of Charles's encounters with the goddess could not be more pointed. The proposal takes place in a hothouse, a place for delicate, exotic plants like steph-
anotis and jasmine, very different from the Undercliff's wild, simple primroses and bluebells. Though at first screened from view like Sarah, Ernestina differs from her in every other respect. She is as delicate as the hothouse plants she tends; strong emotion reduces her to tears, and despite the object of the proposal, the meeting overall and even their first kiss are "chastely asexual" (Fowles 92). In the end, Charles leads her into the house. Sarah, on the other hand, is hardy enough to climb to her woodland perch. Her shock at seeing Charles reduces her to silence but certainly not to tears, and she is not only not led away, but practically drives Charles off, while the sexual undertone of the meeting is evident. The effect on Charles of the two events is equally dissimilar. The encounter with Sarah sparks off a riot of thoughts and emotion which the narrator is at pains to describe. During Charles's proposal to Ernestina, on the other hand, Charles appears quite detached, observing the effects of his remarks on Ernestina but displaying very little emotion of his own, so the narrator accordingly has very little to say about his thoughts or feelings.

As if to underscore this contrast, the narrator turns directly from the description of the proposal to another encounter with Sarah, this time on the track past the Dairy.
Once again that face had an extraordinary effect on him. It was as if after each sight of it, he could not believe its effect, and had to see it again. It seemed both to envelop and reject him; as if she was a figure in a dream, both standing still and yet always receding. (Fowles 95)

Certainly this is the face of the goddess, luring, receding before him as he approaches, a dream-like guide, much more potent in effect than Ernestina. Indeed, the two meetings on the Undercliff make so profound an impression on Charles that he cannot tell Ernestina of them. "He knew he would have been lying if he had dismissed those two encounters lightly, and silence seemed finally less a falsehood in that trivial room" (Fowles 98). Ernestina is nearer the mark than she supposes when she accuses him of "dallying with the wood nymphs" (Fowles 98).

Charles's next meeting with Sarah is within the strict confines of the social cult--during a call at Mrs. Poulteney's, the only time, indeed, that they do meet in an entirely socially proper atmosphere. Here again he begins indifferently, feeling nothing more than an idle curiosity about "how the wild animal would behave in these barred surroundings" (Fowles 112). However, as the call progresses, he begins to see a new facet of her personality: "he decided that the silent Miss Woodruff was laboring under a sense of injustice--and, very interestingly to a shrewd observer,
doing singularly little to conceal it" (Fowles 113). This observation is, we are told, something very few people have noticed before. Charles is capable of discovering things about Sarah that others overlook. Later he finds himself defending Sam's and Mary's behavior to the disapprobation of Mrs. Poulteney and Ernestina, guardians of the social cult. When his eyes meet Sarah's after this slight contretemps, the look is significant: "two stranger had recognized they shared a common enemy. For the first time she did not look through him, but at him" (Fowles 115). The common enemy is, of course, Mrs. Poulteney and by extension the restrictive cult she represents; they are comrades on the road away from the cult whose individual paths on that road are destined to be entangled, though neither realizes it yet. The subject of the disagreement provides a more immediate explanation of Sarah's looking at him, for Charles has been defending Mary, a girl in a social position very little different from Sarah's own, and her right to speak to Sam without incurring social disgrace. It is this glimpse of Charles's personality which gives Sarah hope that he is different from other gentlemen, that he might be willing to give her a chance at a place beyond censure in society. In Sarah's eyes he has passed from an intruder to a comrade and even a possible champion of her cause although to Charles she is perhaps little more than an unfortunate, deserving, as is Mary, of the "common humanity" (Fowles 115) in which he is determined
to give Ernestina a lesson. Yet, whatever their conscious attitudes toward one another, the significant look has passed; their relationship is from here on on a different footing.

After this meeting, Charles experiences a large dose of the social cult, since it is several days before he can again go fossil hunting, and we can see again the contrast of Ernestina's effect on him with Sarah's and his growing discontent. Ernestina he regards as a "'sweet child'" (Fowles 117), a definite contrast with his impression of Sarah. He begins to find Ernestina's fussing over him in repentence for their disagreement at Mrs. Poulteney's a trifle cloying. He is having trouble adjusting to this role of soon-to-be bridegroom, and an evening alone with his bride-to-be quite bores him to sleep. He can bear only so much before he must again escape to the Undercliff. Though the narrator assures us that it is certainly fossils which draw him back to the spot where Sarah had lain, the irony seems rather thick in his tone. However, we are assured that "the intensification of love between Ernestina and himself had driven all thought, or all but the most fleeting, casual thought, of Mrs. Poulteney's secretary from his conscious mind" (Fowles 126, emphasis added).

Of course, he again meets Sarah; this time her coat is caught on a bramble. Having freed it, she slips in the mud as she attempts to hurry past him, and, gentleman that he is, Charles helps her up. As on the Cobb, Charles is all
solicitude for her safety; Sarah, on the other hand, is all suspicion, still a "wild animal" (Fowles 127), still feeling injustice, as her "mutinous" (Fowles 128) air implies. Yet, as before, Charles begins to see more of her nature. He recognizes a "suppressed sensuality" (Fowles 128) in her mouth, and he associates the look in her eyes with the foreign women he has dallied with. "This marked a new stage of his awareness of Sarah. He had realized she was more intelligent and independent than she seemed; he now guessed darker qualities" (Fowles 129). This recognition is a test for Charles, for

To most Englishmen of his age such an intuition of Sarah's real nature would have been repellant; and it did very faintly repel—or at least shock—Charles . . . . but whereas they would, by one of those terrible equations that take place at the behest of the superego, have made Sarah vaguely responsible for being born as she was, he did not . . . . I do not mean that Charles completely exonerated Sarah; but he was far less inclined to blame her than she might have imagined. (Fowles 129)

Charles has perceived another facet of the goddess, and the test of his progress toward completing his heroic quest is his ability to accept this facet. If he does not pass with flying colors, he at least does well, decidedly better than his counterparts in the social cult. However, he is clearly
still playing a role within the cult as the conversation continues. The easy superiority of his tone and the advice he offers—the solution of the social cult—betray the fact that he still regards himself as a member in good standing of that august body. In the same way, Sarah's suspicion and resentment betray her desire to find a place in it, a desire his remark—"'I think the only truly scarlet things about you are your cheeks'" (Fowles 131)—exacerbates. His concern is encouraging in its persistence, its willingness to believe the best of her, and cruel in its polite disinterestedness. Yet as the conversation continues, Charles's self-assurance gradually disappears, stripped away by his inability to understand Sarah. He is baffled by her refusal of Mrs. Tranter's assistance; he cannot understand why she feel herself tied to Lyme, and this lack of understanding is a failure of a test, for as we have said, he must come to know her to fulfill his quest. His common sense reply to her insistence that she has ties in Lyme is evidence of his failure. He leaps to the obvious conclusion that her ties are to Varguennes, and his remark is certainly both common and sensible in the context of the social cult. Yet because Sarah's ties are other than he supposes, his solution is irrelevant to her situation. Charles's ties to the social cult are strong; this is the "deep knowledge in her heart" (Fowles 133) confirmed by his remark. She has expected too much of Charles in thinking he can understand
her at this point. She does, however, make sure that he cannot go on assuming that he has comprehended the situation and that Sarah is merely being stubborn by telling him of Varguennes's marriage, her absolute assurance that he will not return. She leaves Charles, as usual, confused:

His amazement was natural. What was unnatural was his now quite distinct sense of guilt. It was as if he had shown a callous lack of sympathy; when he was quite sure he had done his best. (Fowles 134)

In the end, Sarah has left him with the impression she intends to leave on all the social cult, a feeling of guilt because they cannot understand her and women like her. It is an unnatural feeling insofar as Charles is still a participant in the social cult, for those within the cult normally have no sympathy for those who elect not to participate. That he feels the guilt at all is a signal that he is at least partially a non-participant himself. Finally, the enigmatic character of her departure assures his continued interest in comprehending her.

Just how much of what Sarah says and does here is consciously calculated is difficult to say. Certainly the meeting itself appears accidental, and she appears in a hurry to escape Charles. On the other hand, at the end of their discussion we are told that "For a long moment she seemed almost to enjoy his bewilderment" (Fowles 134) as
though she had planned to have just such an effect. Since we cannot know her thoughts, it is perhaps futile to speculate on her motives, yet it seems also a mistake to assume that everything she does here and elsewhere is either coldly calculated or entirely chance. Her relations with Charles are most likely a combination of the two, just as her luring him on is consciously an attempt to gain a social position and unconsciously an acting out of the part of the goddess. In the end we must go on what we see. She is gradually creating ties between them and testing him to see if he is a fit consort for the goddess.

As has become the regular pattern, Charles returns from the Undercliff to a strong infusion of the social cult by way of contrast; this time the scene is a town concert with Ernestina and Aunt Tranter. Here instead of merely dozing off in boredom, Charles escapes in thought back to the Undercliff and Sarah. He realizes that

he had allowed himself to become far too deeply engaged in conversation with her--no, he had lost all sense of proportion. He had been very foolish, allowing a misplaced chivalry to blind his common sense. . . . (Fowles 137-38)

This is the voice of Charles the socially conventional man. Yet as his thoughts continue, they shift key. He sees Ernestina's humor as "unusually and unwelcomely artificial" (Fowles 138), and looking at her face wonders if it is not
"a little characterless, a little monotonous with its one set paradox of demureness and dryness? If you took away those qualities what remained? A vapid selfishness" (Fowles 138). Though he quickly excuses her in the context of London society, he begins to wonder if that is "the only context--the only market for brides" (Fowles 138) and ends by berating himself for the conventionality of his choice. He is beginning to rebel in earnest against the social cult, and in the midst of his rebellion, he thinks of Sarah, in fact connects her with his awakened feeling of entrapment in the cult.

It seemed clear to him that it was not Sarah in herself who attracted him . . . but some emotion, some possibility she symbolized. She made him aware of a deprivation. His future had always seemed to him of vast potential; and now suddenly it was a fixed voyage to a known place. She had reminded him of that. (Fowles 139)

Thus, Charles specifically associates Sarah with freedom, and this shows a conscious awareness of the boon that he may gain through Sarah.

Charles's next opportunity to escape occurs several days later when Ernestina has a migraine. Interestingly, he hesitates to go to the Undercliff at first, having firmly "banned from his mind thoughts of the tests lying waiting to be discovered; and thoughts, now associated with them, of
women lying asleep on sunlit ledges" (Fowles 145). Many critics have remarked on the aptness of the fact that the fossils Charles searches for are called "tests." The difficulty of finding them adds to their "charm," and, not to stretch the point too far, their influence is rather like a magical spell drawing Charles to the Undercliff and Sarah and her testing of him, especially since she has become so closely associated with them in Charles's mind. He finally leaves for the Undercliff because he is "not really in the mood for anything; strangely there had come ragingly upon him the old travel-lust... He wished he might be in... some blazing Mediterranean spring... to be free..." (Fowles 145-46). His discontent with his social position symbolized by his engagement to Ernestina grows with each meeting with Sarah.

In searching for his tests Charles gradually moves deeper into the wild landscape than he has been before, passing through a tunnel of ivy to a place that is "most likely to yield tests" (Fowles 147). The tunnel suggests the passage into the Underworld even more strongly than the name Undercliff, and the Underworld is, of course, one symbol of the unknown region in which the hero journeys. Furthermore, the place has had "a recent fall of flints" (Fowles 147), a recent unearthing of the ancient past caught in the fossil rock, suggestive of the ancient story Charles and Sarah are playing out. And sure enough, no sooner does
he begin his search for tests than Sarah arrives. Again Charles's first reaction is typical of the social cult: "He wondered why he had ever thought she was not indeed slightly crazed" (Fowles 147). However, as always, his attitude gradually changes during this meeting.

This scene echoes with a decidedly religious overtone from the first. Sarah, standing above Charles in front of the "entombing greenery" (Fowles 148), is lit up by a ray of sunlight, and Charles recalls "that it was just so that a peasant near Gavarnie, in the Pyrenees, had claimed to have seen the Virgin Mary standing on a deboulis beside his road" (Fowles 148). This time she offers him literal as well as figurative tests, and as they talk about the fossils, Charles decides that she is "very far from deranged" (Fowles 149). Eventually he makes as if to leave, "but he [cannot] resist a last look back at her" (Fowles 149), and today she shows yet another new face. "[Her] look, though it still suggested some of the old universal reproach, now held an intensity that was far more of appeal" (Fowles 149). Here is a Sarah asking for help rather than refusing it, and asking it specifically of Charles, since she rejects his suggestions that she turn to Mrs. Tranter or the vicar. She also firmly rejects his conventional solution to her situation--that she should go to London. She effectively forces him out of his role in the social cult and into the role she is testing him for, that of priest, as her remark, "'I have
sinned'" (Fowles 150) and the overall religious tone of the scene show. To enhance the overtone of religion, we are told that this is a "revelation" to Charles and that he feels "obscurely flattered, as a clergyman does whose advice is sought on a spiritual problem" (Fowles 150). Furthermore, Charles is described as staring at the "bowed head of the sinner before him" (Fowles 151). He feels a sudden empathy for Sarah, then as quickly searches for a way to restore the social propriety of the situation. And when he says he cannot understand why Sarah has chosen him for her confessor, in answer she rehearses a "litany" (Fowles 151) of the qualities that mark him as a hero.

Her explanation of her feelings emphasizes her strong sense of isolation from society and her equally strong sense that she is meant to belong somewhere, but not among the members of the social cult. It is odd that Sarah has these perceptions and yet still pursues Charles for the social place he can grant her, but then, we have remarked that what appear to be her conscious motives differ from her subconscious ones. She says,

"I live among people the world tells me are kind, pious, Christian people. And they seem to me crueler than the cruelest heathens, stupider than the stupidest animals. I cannot believe that the truth is so. That life is without understanding or compassion. That there are not spirits
generous enough to understand what I have suffered and why I suffer . . . and that, whatever sins I have committed, it is not right that I should suffer so much. . . . My only happiness is when I sleep. When I wake, the nightmare begins. I feel cast on a desert island, imprisoned, condemned, and I know not what crime it is for." (Fowles 151)

Several things are worth noting here. First of all, she continues to place Charles in the role of a confessor and keeps up the religious tone with her talk of suffering for sins. She sounds almost Job-like here. Second, the waking world, the world of common day, is her nightmare; she is happy in sleep, the retreat to the unknown. Last, though she speaks of having sinned and having committed a crime, she does not know what it is. Here she cannot be referring to her only obvious "sin," her running off to Varguennes. If she were, why would she say she does not know what her crime is? If she felt rejected only because of Varguennes, the reason for the rejection would, of course, be obvious, and we would then have to wonder why she has let the town believe a lie about that night. Clearly she has accepted blame in that instance to justify to herself this other, subtler sense of blame she has felt all her life because she is different from other girls of her class and does not fit into the cult.
Though she does not phrase them that way, Sarah's questions at this point—"'Why am I born who I am? Why am I not born Miss Freeman?'" (Fowles 152)—are theological. They question the wisdom of God's plan for the world. And she has cast Charles in the role of priest, demanding that he answer her. Though he does absolve her from envy, an attitude she denies, he admits that a real answer to her questions is "'beyond my powers--the power of far wiser men than myself'" (Fowles 152). Sarah refuses to believe Charles's impotence in the face of such questions. Her refusal to admit his impotence in this matter is a sign of her refusal to admit that the social cult does not have answers for her questions even while it is also a goad to Charles to reject societal values and try to find some way to answer her, some way to fill adequately the role she has cast him in.

At this point, the narrator reminds us again that Sarah and Charles are more than merely a man and woman meeting in a wood; they are god and goddess, hero and heroine, entwined in one another's heroic journey. We are told that Charles finds he cannot leave:

Perhaps he had too fixed an idea of what a siren looked like and the circumstances in which she appeared—long tresses, a chaste alabaster nudity, mermaid's tail, matched by an Odysseus with a face acceptable in the best clubs. There were no
Doric temples in the Undercliff; but here was a Calypso. (Fowles 152)

Sarah is, of course, identified definitely as Calypso, but there are subtler identifications here as well. Charles is clearly Odysseus: the remark about the face acceptable in the best clubs echoes his earlier examination of his face in the mirror at the White Lion, while the remark about Doric temples is surely a veiled reference to the description of Charles's nose as "Doric" (Fowles 50) in that same moment at the mirror. The description of the siren is a foreshadowing of Sarah's appearance at their meeting in Exeter. There her hair is loose; she wears a thin white nightgown—certainly the Victorian equivalent of "chaste nudity"—and while she does not have a tail, her feet and legs are swathed in a blanket and supposedly useless because of a sprained ankle. Also interesting is that unlike Odysseus, both at Exeter and in the present scene, Charles cannot stay away; here he cannot leave; at Exeter he does not stay on the train taking him to Ernestina.

As we have remarked, in all of the meetings between Charles and Sarah, Charles oscillates between his role in the social cult and his role outside of it. Always, as here, Sarah draws him away from the cult gradually until suddenly his conventional side snaps back into ascendancy, yet each time he goes less of the way back to the cult. So now, when she asks him to hear her story, his conventional
side triumphs, and he makes up his mind to leave. Sarah, personification of the goddess as she is, "divine[s] his intention" (Fowles 153) and sinks to her knees, again reinforcing the religious tone of the meeting. Indeed, divination is a good way to characterize most of Sarah's responses to Charles. She seems always to anticipate and forestall the thoughts and objections of his conventional side, as she does throughout the end of this scene. After she kneels, just as Charles is examining her face for traces of madness, she assures him that she is not yet mad. When he protests that he cannot meet her again, she counters with what is, despite her protests to the contrary, a subtle threat, telling him she has already once nearly visited him at his lodgings, an event sure to cause scandal. When he tries to insist on Mrs. Tranter's presence at the meeting, she insists that she cannot be honest before that lady. When he protests that he is an unsuitable confidant in such circumstances, she insists that he is perfect for the role. Even her gift of the tests speaks on her behalf, and she again "divines" (Fowles 155) his last objection and agrees to take his advice once he has heard her story. She has trapped him by anticipating his every move to escape.

Charles's reactions to his situation show that he perceives that the path of his life has changed.

It was as if the road he walked, seemingly across a plain, became suddenly a brink over an abyss.
He knew it as he stared at her bowed head. He could not say what had lured him on, what had gone wrong in his reading of the map, but both lost and lured he felt. (Fowles 156)

Sarah is leading him deeper into the unknown, gradually confronting him with each face of the goddess, testing him for his heroic role, and he can but follow her. As usual when he is not in her presence, however, Charles reverts to social propriety on his way back to town.

The farther he moved from her, in time and distance, the more clearly he saw the folly of his behavior. It was as if, when she was before him, he had become blind: had not seen her for what she was, a woman most patently dangerous—not consciously so, but prey to intense emotional frustration and no doubt social resentment. (Fowles 156)

Here we have society's picture of Sarah based on the previous scene, and dangerous she is to Charles's intention to remain firmly a part of the social cult. Yet that, too, is a face of the goddess with which he must deal. We have remarked that each time Sarah lures him into the unknown, Charles returns less of the way back to the known. This is clear from the fact that as he returns to town "this time he [does] not even debate whether he should tell Ernestina; he [knows] he [will] not" (Fowles 156).
Like all the scenes that Sarah creates, this one serves a dual purpose, conscious and unconscious. We have said that Sarah's conscious motive in becoming involved with Charles is to earn a place in the social cult by getting Charles to marry her. On that level then, Charles is the priest of the social cult; if he will absolve her from her sins, society will accept her. However, on the level of their joint heroic journeys away from society, things differ. One of the roles of the hero who ventures out from society into the unknown is that of the priest or shaman (Campbell 98-101, 199-200, 256), the one who journeys into the unknown for the benefit of another. Sarah is testing Charles for that role; will he venture into the unknown realm of her thought, by listening to her story, and thus help her? His willingness to do so is a gauge of his progress as her willingness to conduct the exploration is a gauge of hers.

Like the swing of a pendulum, the action again returns to the social cult of Lyme, oscillating as Charles does. As at the concert, Charles's Lyme surroundings seem conspiring with Sarah to move him along on his heroic journey, for we must remember that Lyme, in its very restrictiveness, is part of the unknown, part of what Campbell calls the hero's Road of Trials. The dinner party that Charles returns to is a study in contrasts. Listening to Doctor Grogan's talk and
watching Ernestina's and Aunt Tranter's differing reactions to it, Charles is struck by

a nostalgia for this more open culture of [Aunt Tranter's and Grogan's] respective youths. . . .
[and] he had a whiff of corollary nausea for his own time: its stifling propriety, its worship not only of the literal machine . . . but of the far more terrible machine now erecting in social convention. (Fowles 159)

More strongly than ever he is here aware of feeling stifled by the social cult. Interestingly, Charles's thoughts here are directly opposite of those which struck him and Ernestina after their call at Mrs. Poulteney's. Then they both felt "the same insight: the wonderful new freedoms their age brought" (Fowles 117). His feelings of dissatisfaction lead him to thoughts of Sarah which he dismisses, telling himself he has taken her too seriously, and so from Sarah, naturally, to Ernestina. Yet despite his special solicitude for her, he is again struck by her shallowness, by her seeming more cute than acute. Like the culture of which she is a product, Ernestina seems a machine: "Was there not, beneath the demure knowingness, something of the automaton about her, of one of those ingenious girl-machines from Hoffman's Tales?" (Fowles 159). This objection he quickly excuses by again labeling her a child, but as we
know, the hero is led by a goddess who is always just beyond
him, one he does not completely understand, not a child whom
he fully comprehends.

Along with the goddess, the hero must also meet in the
course of his initiation, a tyrant to be overcome and a
father figure to whom the hero must make atonement.
Campbell calls the tyrant Holdfast and remarks that "the
mythological hero is the champion not of things become but
of things becoming; the dragon to be slain by him is precisely
the monster of the status quo: Holdfast, the keeper of the
past" (337). He is the figure who opposes the union with
the goddess. The father figure may be seen as an authority
figure, one who guards the rules of the cult, meting out
justice for infractions, and whom the hero must come to see
as not only just and wrathful but also merciful and gracious
(Campbell 126-49). Fowles combines these two figures in the
form of Dr. Michael Grogan. The father is one who is
already an initiate into the heroic cult. In The French
Lieutenant's Woman, of course, we are dealing with two
separate heroic cults, and Grogan is an initiate in each,
truly "Master of the Two Worlds" (Campbell 229-237) as
Campbell would say, possessing the

Freedom to pass back and forth across the world
division, from the perspective of the apparitions
of time to that of the causal deep and back--not
contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other. (229)

His acceptance into both the social cult of the time and that to which Charles and Sarah are being drawn is evident in the description of him:

when he was with you you felt he was always hovering a little, waiting to pounce on any foolishness—and yet, if he liked you, it was always with a tonic wit and the humanity of a man who has lived and learned, after his fashion, to let live. There was, too, something faintly dark about him, for he had been born a Catholic; he was . . . accepted now, but still with the devil's singe on him. It was certain . . . that he was now (like Disraeli) a respectable member of the Church of England. It must be so, for (unlike Disraeli) he went scrupulously to matins every Sunday. That a man could be so indifferent to religion that he would have gone to a mosque or a synagogue, had that been the chief place of worship, was a deceit beyond the Lymers' imagination. (Fowles 158)

The good doctor's attitude is reminiscent of a remark of Campbell's: "No man can return from such exercises [as the heroic journey] and take very seriously himself as Mr.
So-an-so of Such-and-such township, U.S.A." (386). This attitude, coupled with the reference to the Underworld in the idea of the "devil's singe," is quite enough to hint that however respectable he may appear, the doctor has ventured on some adventures beyond the social cult, a hint which will later be reinforced.

The identification of the doctor as Master of Two Worlds and father figure for Charles is borne out during Charles's first visit to Grogan's house. It is an interesting house, seeming to look from the world of common day into the unknown region. From his study Grogan looks in summer on "the nereids who came to take the waters" (Fowles 160), merely a figure of speech, perhaps, but certainly a reminder of the principle that the goddess is in every woman. Furthermore, as he looks out at the chaos of the sea in the night, Charles feel "himself in suspension between two worlds, the warm, neat civilization behind his back, the cool, dark mystery outside" (Fowles 161). Thus, Charles comes to a sudden awareness of his position in the doctor's house. He glimpses briefly what the doctor knows, that there are two worlds, the one created by his society and the one beyond it, a concept Charles, too, must eventually master. That the doctor is a father figure is clear from the marked similarity of their minds, as demonstrated by their sharing the same political views and being disciples of Darwin, and by the fact that Charles, who refuses the advice of other
authority figures in his life like his uncle and later Mr. Freeman, accepts a rebuke from him and accepts his diagnosis of Sarah's condition, though he does not believe anyone else's.

Undercliff--Sarah's Story

In the end, the doctor's remarks about Sarah are what decide Charles on going to hear her story. By the time of this confessional meeting, Charles has thoroughly rationalized both his involvement with Sarah and his neglecting to tell Ernestina. Both rationalizations are the result of his interview with Grogan, for Grogan has said that if Sarah could tell her feelings to someone she would be cured (Fowles 16).

[Charles] had been frank enough to admit to himself that [the meeting with Sarah] contained . . . an element of pleasure; but now he detected a clear element of duty. He himself belonged undoubtedly to the fittest; but the human fittest had no less certain responsibility to the less fit. (Fowles 174)

Ernestina, on the other hand, has "neither the sex nor the experience to understand the altruism of his motives" (Fowles 174), the implication being that Grogan would understand. Thus, the father figure has urged Charles on in his quest. He has not yet emerged as the tyrant Holdfast.
This meeting, like the last one, is carefully staged. This time, not only is Sarah waiting for him, she also leads him from the spot where they meet deeper into the wilderness of the Undercliff. More than ever she is luring Charles along. We have already noted that at this point Charles suspects her of flirting with him, preceding him up the hill, showing her lovely hair. She also at this meeting leads him deeper into the Undercliff than he has ever been before, through a second cave-like tunnel of ivy, across a "dangerously angled" (Fowles 176) slope, and so to a solitary dell reminiscent of the ledge where Charles found her asleep. Significantly, Sarah passes easily over the difficult ground while Charles labors behind her. She is leading him over ground she has covered before; the goddess "can never be greater than [the hero], though she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending" (Campbell 116). She has led him deep into the region of the unknown in order, characteristically, to stage a scene in which he will be confronted with yet another facet of her personality, another face of the goddess. Appropriately, the little clearing is a "kind of minute green amphitheater" (Fowles 176), and again Sarah has cast Charles in a role in order to test him, as evidenced by the imagery of the scene. Sarah seats him on a "rustic throne" (Fowles 176) formed by a flat-topped rock against the trunk of a thorn tree and sits on the ground before him so that he feels "a little regal
with this strange supplicant at his feet" (Fowles 177). Here Charles is king and judge rather than priest, a role he appears to accept, for he tells her, "'Miss Woodruff, I detest immorality. But morality without mercy I detest rather more. I promise not to be too severe a judge!'" (Fowles 177). It is just this role she has brought him here to test, for "The hero who can take [the goddess] as she is, without undue commotion but with the kindness and assurance she requires, is potentially the king, the incarnate god, of her created world" (Campbell 116).

As usual, this meeting is at first uncomfortably formal. Charles is aware of the vast difference between Sarah and women of his class in London. "She seemed totally indifferent to fashion; and survived in spite of it, just as the simple primroses at Charles's feet survived all the competition of exotic conservatory plants" (Fowles 177). This last recalls his proposal to Ernestina and reminds us of the doubt he has had about his choice of bride. Furthermore, though Saran has requested the meeting, Charles feels that he is "being challenged to coax the mystery out of her" (Fowles 177). Charles must be the seeker in his quest. Duly surrendering to this necessity, he requests that she begin, which she abruptly does.

She begins by telling Charles what she admired about Varguennes--his courage--but as she proceeds, what emerges
is what she has learned from him, things her vicarious experience of the world through fiction has not taught her.

"'I did not then know that men can be both very brave and very false'" (Fowles 178). "'At the time of this wreck he said he was first officer. But all he said was false'"

(Fowles 178). "'He told me foolish things about myself... I foolishly believed him'" (Fowles 178). She learns, then, that one cannot trust appearances. She sees both his good and bad faces. Varguennes, as we have said, is to Sarah as she is to Charles, a lure, a guide down the path of heroism. She says, "'Sometimes I think he had nothing to do with the shipwreck. He was the devil in the guise of a sailor'"

(Fowles 178), and certainly he is an emissary from the Underworld, from the unknown region. Like Charles, Sarah only partially understands what is happening as Varguennes leads her away from her accepted role in the social cult.

"'Very often I did not comprehend perfectly what he was saying'" (Fowles 179). Yet Campbell tells us, "when the adventurer... is not a youth but a maid, she is the one who, by her qualities, her beauty, or her yearning, is fit to become the consort of an immortal" (119), and Sarah tells Charles he cannot understand her plight because

"You were not born a woman with a natural respect, a love of intelligence, beauty, learning... I don't know how to say it, I have no right to
desire these things, but my heart craves them and I cannot believe it is all vanity." (Fowles 179)

Clearly, Sarah is fit for her role, and she must have her union with the god, as Charles with the goddess. Yet as we know, Varguennes is not the god but only a herald.

The king/judge imagery continues as Sarah expands on her feelings of isolation and her frustration and desire for revenge on the society that has isolated her. Charles tells her, "'I'm not sure that I can condone your feelings. But I understand them perfectly'" (Fowles 181), making a careful distinction between his attitude as king/judge and his attitude as merely listener. Sarah says her "blindness to [Varguennes's] real character, must seem to a stranger to my nature and circumstances at that time so great that it cannot be but criminal'" (Fowles 182, emphasis added).

Further, Charles's questioning of her is very like a judge's questioning a witness to clarify a point. The parallelism of their situations is also called to our attention. When Sarah remarks that the path of deceit is difficult to reascend, the narrator comments, "That might have been a warning to Charles; but he was too absorbed in her story to think of his own" (Fowles 182). And as she continues her story, we see Sarah still learning from Varguennes:

"I cannot tell you how, but I knew he was changed . . . . I knew then I had been for him no more than an amusement during his convalescence. The
veil before my eyes dropped. . . . I saw marriage with him would have been marriage to a worthless adventurer." (Fowles 183)

She has certainly seen both faces of the god now, and from her story here it would seem she had endured them and been united with him. We know, of course, that this is not true, that she has not gone so far down the path. Varguennes cannot be an appropriate manifestation of the god for Sarah, and the reasons why are in what she says of him and of the night at Weymouth: "'I was first of all as if frozen with horror at the realization of my mistake--and yet so horrible was it . . . I tried to see worth in him, respectability, honor'" (Fowles 183). However, she cannot; Varguennes is truly worthless and thus disqualified to play the role of a god, for the god must truly have both faces; Varguennes has only one, which he can hide on occasion. Furthermore, Sarah is enraged at his deceit. She has not found any way to deal with the darkness of his character and the situation in which she finds herself. In addition, she explains, her alleged giving in to Varguennes is a "'kind of suicide'" (Fowles 185), but "The meeting with the goddess [or god in this case] . . . is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love . . . , which is life itself . . ." (Campbell 118). In some measure, the surrender to Varguennes is life-preserving, however, for Sarah says, "'If I had left that room, and returned to Mrs. Talbot's, and resumed my
former existence, I know that by now I should be truly dead
... and by my own hand" (Fowles 185), but she has not
gained greater life; presently she is merely subsisting at
Mrs. Poulteney's. Yet, by saying she has been united
with the god, she has created for herself a fragile
imitation of the freedom that is her ultimate boon. She has
gained entry to the unknown region and thus "'No insult, no
blame, can touch me. Because I have set myself beyond the
pale'" (Fowles 185). Eventually, however, she must gain her
true freedom, not this created imitation.

Charles is still in his king/judge role: Sarah calls
her action a "'crime'" (Fowles 185), and he thinks of her
explanation as a "justification" (Fowles 186), yet he
undergoes an important change at this point. Up to now he
has been the judge of the social cult, considering her case
dispasionately but sympathetically. Up until her explana-
tion of her actions at Weymouth he can say "'I understand
... perfectly'" (Fowles 181). All of her behavior and
feelings up to that point are at least understandable, if
not wholly condoned, within the context of the social cult:
"he could imagine the slow tantalizing agonies of her life
as a governess; how easily she might have fallen into the
clutches of such a plausible villain as Varguennes" (Fowles
185). Charles can imagine these things, explain them, form
some judgement about them, "but [her] talk of freedom beyond
the pale, of marrying shame, he found incomprehensible"
(Fowles 185). He cannot explain her behavior at Weymouth to himself in terms that will fit into the social cult.

And yet in a way he understood, for . . . . He saw [her] cheeks were wet, and he felt unbearably touched; beset by a maze of cross-currents and swept hopelessly away from his safe anchorage of judicial, and judicious sympathy. He saw the scene she had not detailed: her giving herself. He was at one and the same time Varguennes enjoying her and the man who sprang forward and struck him down; just as Sarah was to him both an innocent victim and a wild, abandoned woman. Deep in himself he forgave her her unchastity; and glimpsed the dark shadows where he might have enjoyed it himself. (Fowles 185-86)

We have glanced at this passage before; now we must examine it in detail.

First, note that Charles understands her here in a different way than previously. Where before he has been judicial and judicious, in control of himself, his attitude dictated by duty, now he is out of control, swept about by his emotions, free from the pre-determined position he had adopted. We have already remarked that Charles's very imperfect understanding of Sarah here is analogous to her own imperfect understanding of Varguennes earlier. Indeed, this scene is interesting in that the subject of Charles's
inadequate understanding is partially Sarah's detailing of the situation she feels she understood inadequately. Second, he has been confronted with a new face of the goddess and accepted it. Up to this meeting he has refused to believe in her unchastity. Now she has declared that she has definitely been unchaste, an assertion which is, though actually false, true both so far as Charles knows and in the sense that it describes actions of which Sarah is certainly capable, regardless of whether she has done them in reality. Charles responds with forgiveness, and significantly, he responds so because he senses a truth about himself. Campbell has said that "the whole sense of the road of trials [is that] the hero . . . discovers and assimilates his opposite (his own unsuspected self)" (108). Charles has glimpsed the side of himself that is like Varguennes; how he assimilates it remains to be seen, but he knows it is there. He has passed another test. For a few moments here, he is free from the constraint of society, and Sarah's confession seems to "offer a glimpse of an ideal world" (Fowles 187), a world that is somehow an escape from the dissatisfaction he has been feeling. That this world is the unknown region, the Underworld, is clear from the mention of "a figure, a dark shadow, his dead sister [that] moved ahead of him, lightly, luringly, up the ashlar steps and into the broken columns' mystery" (Fowles 187); the dead are often guides in the Underworld. That the luring figure is the shade of his
sister and not Sarah is a confirmation that Charles's ultimate goal is not Sarah herself but what she, as one manifestation of the goddess, of which his sister is another, can lead him to.

His visionary glimpse of his own situation is akin to the moment after the meeting just before this one when she asked him to hear her story. At that point we have noted that he felt "the road he walked, seemingly across a plain, became suddenly a brink over an abyss" (Fowles 156). Here he dimly perceives his direction--upwards into mystery. But the moment does not last long. As Sarah continues her story, he reverts in an instant to his dutiful social self, falling back, indeed, on Dr. Grogan's "commonsensical reaction" (Fowles 189) and advice, which, though they did, as we have observed, encourage Charles to hear Sarah's story, also fostered the very socially proper, scientific judiciousness of his attitude. He offers her the same advice she has heard from many other members of the social cult, and at this suggestion, "something in the set of her face suggested to him that she felt she had made a mistake; that he was trite, a mere mouther of convention" (Fowles 189-90). He appears on the brink of failing this second test. His reversion to society is nowhere more apparent than in his thought as they stand near the edge of the open bluff: "They were now more exposed, visible to anyone in the trees below" (Fowles 190); he asks her to step back, for
safety, he says, but in her look "There was once again a kind of penetration of his real motive that was disconcertingly naked" (Fowles 190).

Charles frequently associates the idea of nakedness, of exposure, with Sarah, as here. Until the very end of the novel, he fears being seen openly with her. When she pleads with him to hear her story, he is driven to agree partially by a desire to do anything to escape "those remorselessly sincere, those naked eyes" (Fowles 154) and is disturbed by the fact that, unlike Ernestina, Sarah refuses to wear the mask of conventionality (Fowles 155). His moment of intuitive understanding when she confesses her "crime" is precipitated by his awareness of "the openness of Sarah's confession--both so open in itself and in the open sunlight--[which] seemed less to present a sharper reality than to offer a glimpse of an ideal world.... where naked beauty mattered far more than naked truth" (Fowles 187). A little later her "directness of thought and language" strikes Charles as "a presumption of intellectual... proximity, a proximity like a nakedness" (Fowles 192). Indeed, during their meeting when she tells her story the idea of nakedness is nearly as important as the king/judge imagery and functions as an ironic undercurrent to the manipulative deception Sarah employs in the scene, for she is certainly only partially open with Charles here.

Charles's unwillingness to be seen openly with Sarah here is
matched by her unwillingness to tell him the truth openly. Thus, another index of the progress of their quests is the extent to which these attitudes change.

In asking her to step back for fear of being seen, then, Charles has failed the second test Sarah offers him in this scene, but this is in keeping with the pattern of their meetings. Each time he makes some progress and then Sarah goes on before him, leaving him confused. Here she answers his advice that she leave Lyme with her reason for staying: "'If I leave here I leave my shame. Then I am lost'" (Fowles 190). We have already remarked that she has taken upon herself the role of a reproach to society, the role of a martyr, here symbolized by her pricking her finger on the hawthorn with its suggestion of the crown of thorns. The moment foreshadows Charles's confused concept of himself crucified upon Sarah during the epiphany in the Exeter church. Sarah's action here appears deliberate and staged, underscoring the fictional nature of the role she has taken up. Society's universal misunderstanding of it is, as we have seen, an indication that it is not Sarah's true role, and the weakness of her position here weakens the conclusions Charles arrives at in Exeter as we shall see later.

Oddly enough, Charles's advice, though it is conventional wisdom, is also at least partially correct. To gain her freedom Sarah must, indeed, give up the role she has taken up, the easiest way of accomplishing which would
seem to be leaving Lyme, though the rest of his advice, finding a new governessing position, is out of the question. The accuracy of this assessment of his advice is borne out by subsequent events, of course, but also here by the fact that Dr. Grogan, the Master of the Two Worlds, has given the same advice. Charles springs his knowledge of Grogan's advice on Sarah at this point, and his doing so is a sign of progress in that it catches her off guard. Up to this point Sarah has been firmly in control of all but their very earliest of meetings. She has been able to anticipate his every move and thus lead him on. Now Charles is beginning to take responsibility for his own moves, and though his moment of control is short, it is real. Sarah seems puzzled that he insists on the same counsel as before and again attempts to make him understand the role she has created for herself: "'I am like this thorn tree, Mr. Smithson. No one reproaches it for growing here in this solitude. It is when it walks down Broad Street that it offends society'" (Fowles 191). They arrive, finally, at the same questions as before--"'What you question now is the justice of existence'" (Fowles 191)--though this time perceived in terms in keeping with the imagery of the scene. Here Sarah insists that such questioning bears bitter fruit though we do not know what it is, yet. That the fruit is bitter suggests that, as earlier asserted, the questions are not adequately answered.
Faced with the identical advice from both Charles, the hero figure, and Grogan, Master of the Two Worlds, Sarah agrees at least to consider it seriously. Their respective roles appear to be reversed at this point; Charles appears really in control as evidenced by his resumption of the easily superior tone of his social self. He has, despite the unwitting soundness of his advice, reverted to his role in the social cult as has become usual at the end of their meetings. Yet, as is also usual, Sarah cannot leave him feeling assured and secure in his role, and the sudden appearance of Sam and Mary, "young lovers as plain as the ashes were old trees" (Fowles 194), provides her an opportunity to throw him back off balance. The device of a parallel subplot among the servants is one that is as old as Shakespeare at least, and Fowles makes ironic use of it here. The free and easy air of the servants, their light-hearted happiness, underscores the dreadful discomfort Charles feels in Sarah's presence as well as the dissatisfaction he feels in Ernestina's. Neither of the women in his life brings him the kind of joy and awe that Mary inspires in Sam, a hint that Charles will, finally, end up without either of them. Charles's fear of discovery emphasizes the fact that he is now entirely his social self while Mary's dress is a reminder of Ernestina and the guilt he feels in connection with her. The moment also recalls the day at Mrs. Poulteney's when Charles's defense of Mary
sparked an awareness of comradeship between him and Sarah. Sarah's smile suggests that she may, indeed, be thinking of his defense of Mary's right to love. The moment also, of course, foreshadows the later scene in which Sam and Mary do see them, but, more importantly, here it provokes Sarah's smile, a smile that is to Charles "as strange, as shocking, as if she had thrown off her clothes" (Fowles 195). Here again is the quality of nakedness that Charles associates with her. The smile challenges the social role he has resumed at this point, and yet his only response is an answering smile, for her smile "excused Sam and Mary, it excused all; and in some way too subtle for analysis, undermined all that had passed between Charles and herself till then" (Fowles 196).

Here then is another face of the goddess, a contradiction of what he has seen so far. As usual, Charles's response to the revelation is instructive:

he found himself smiling; only with his eyes, but smiling. And excited, in some way too obscure and general to be called sexual, to the very roots of his being; like a man who at last comes, at the end of a long high wall, to the sought-for door . . . but only to find it locked.

For several moments they stood, the woman who was the door, the man without the key; and then she lowered her eyes again. . . . Charles saw the
truth: he really did stand with one foot over the precipice. . . . He knew if he reached out his arms he would meet with no resistance . . . only a passionate reciprocity of feeling. The red in his cheeks deepened, and at last he whispered, "We must never meet alone again." (Fowles 195)

The smile is certainly in some sense an invitation, and Charles responds to it instinctively; it forces him out of his role of propriety and provokes a realization of his position as Sarah's actions and words generally do. From Campbell we know that the hero attains union with the goddess at the end of the Road of Trials and that the goddess symbolizes knowledge. Here then is Charles on the very brink of gaining the knowledge he searches for, having only to stretch forth his arms, but he has not yet the courage to throw off the social conventions that hold him back. The ability to reject society's restrictive code is, of course, the boon he seeks, and Sarah leads him gradually nearer to doing it at each meeting as is clear from his perceptions of his position, closer and closer to plunging over a precipice. Yet until Sarah also is in a position to realize her own boon from their eventual union, it does not occur. The meetings follow the same pattern each time through the one at Exeter. Sarah gradually manipulates Charles away from his social role; the tension builds as he oscillates between social and solitary roles until he and Sarah are on the brink
of coming together. Each time they come closer to union until Exeter, and each time Charles ends by resuming his social role though each time he is more disturbed than before when he parts with Sarah. At this meeting, as later, an interruption from Mary and Sam provokes his reversion.

As with the earlier scene, the scene of Sarah's confession has a two-fold meaning, conscious and unconscious. Consciously Sarah is trying to create a world in which she and Charles can marry and fit into the social hero cult, a world where she can be accepted as herself and escape the blame that she feels, the obscure guilt that she has transferred to the concrete episode with Varguennes. To that end she must tell Charles all, and he must accept her despite her (false) confirmation of the worst of the rumors about her. Unconsciously Sarah is leading Charles to a realization of the inadequacy of the social cult. She creates a situation in which his natural inclination to forgive her wars with the precepts of society which would subject her to eternal condemnation. She has figuratively presented to Charles the negative side of her nature, the side he would have the most difficulty in accepting, for the goddess "unites the 'good' and the 'bad' . . . [and] The devotee is expected to contemplate the two with equal equanimity" (Campbell 114). That Charles does not condemn her at this point is a sign of progress; however, greater tests remain. This confrontation has been figurative,
impersonal, a past event that involved someone else, and though he thinks he can imagine himself in Varguennes's supposed place and thus forgive her, he must actually be placed there before his real progress can be judged.

For Sarah, his forgiveness of her fictional "crime" encourages her further in her belief that through Charles she can gain a place in the social cult as evidenced by her later action manipulating him into further involvement with her by throwing herself entirely under his protection, sending him her address, etc. So while Charles moves slowly toward freedom from the social cult, Sarah appears to be moving the other direction or at least standing still in a kind of stasis between conscious and unconscious motives.

Undercliff—Last Meeting

As usual as Charles moves away from Sarah and the Undercliff, he journeys back towards his more conventional self. Here again he goes less of the way back than before as evidenced by the process of rationalization by which he satisfies his social conscience, arriving at last at the conclusion that his physical attraction to Sarah is harmless since it has come to nothing and he will not in the future allow it to and that he is perfectly justified, therefore, in keeping his involvement with Sarah from Ernestina. He is, of course, ignoring the extraordinary effect Sarah has upon him, the evidence he has that she is
perfectly capable of causing him to abandon his pre-
determined attitudes no matter how definitely he resolves
upon them. He has now, also, decided not to tell Ernestina
merely to avoid teasing, but is firmly committed to
deception out of a feeling that he is justified in doing so.
Ironically, he arrives at all of these conclusions by "free
will," the existence of which is, for Charles, an illusion
at present, given his obsession with Sarah and her compelling
effect on him.

Events, however, as they have seemed to do before,
are conspiring against Charles' dutiful resolutions.
Destiny closes in in the forms of a telegram from Winsyatt
and Sarah's deliberate appearance on her way back from the
Undercliff before Mrs. Fairley. The news at Winsyatt of his
uncle's impending marriage and the distinct possibility of
sons to displace Charles in inheriting the estate serves to
remove Charles from his comfortable position in the social
cult. Charles's inheritance seems
to him to explain all his previous idling through
life, his dallying with religion, with science,
with travel; he ha[s] been waiting for this moment
... his call to the throne, so to speak ...
Duty--that [is] his real wife, his Ernestina and his
Sarah. ... (Fowles 207)

Loss of the estate is loss of his obligation to the cult,
loss of his feeling of participation, of belonging. Even
his own engagement is unimportant in the face of it. He has, in a sense, no further reason for conforming to the social cult; he has no real place in it. The loss of the estate also exacerbates his misgiving about that other social obligation—his engagement—for Ernestina's unladylike behavior reminds him that, indeed, "'all one has in such circumstances is one's dignity'" (Fowles 211). His behavior as a gentleman is all he really has left to entitle him to his role in the social cult. The news of Sarah's dismissal, the direct result of her having been seen by Mrs. Fairley, threatens to remove even this last claim on the cult if they have been seen together. His wild desire to find Sarah is, at first, as much a result of this fear as concern for her safety. The two notes from her at his hotel increase Charles's apprehension, for they make his involvement with her, if not its exact nature, known to the servants in the hotel and to Sam.

The pressure of his indecision about what to do and his apprehension over his reputation combine to give him flashing insights into his present situation. He recalls the fossil he gave to Ernestina, the ammonites trapped by circumstance:

In a vivid insight, a flash of black lightening, he saw that all life was parallel: that evolution was not vertical, ascending to perfection, but
horizontal. Time was the great fallacy; existence was without history, was always now, was always this being caught in the same fiendish machine. All those painted screens erected by man to shut out reality--history, religion, duty, social position, all were illusions, mere opium fantasies. (Fowles 216)

Charles here has suddenly glimpsed the world through the naturalistic spectacles of late nineteenth century thought. He has come to a fuller understanding of the implications of the Darwinian views he espouses. As he is gradually stripped of the duties in life that gave him purpose, the social ritual of preserving propriety that he felt so important, he realizes that they are illusions, that he does continue to exist without them, but paradoxically that he can find no purpose for that existence. It is an easy leap from there to a kind of feverish existentialistic desire to do something, "a wild determination to make some gesture that would show he was more than an ammonite stranded in a drought, that he could strike out against the dark cloud that enveloped him" (Fowles 219). Like most normal people, Charles is disturbed by the thought that there might be no reason for his existence. His Darwinian philosophy leads him to contemplate such an idea once his faith in duty and society has played him false, but as is usual with questions of existence in Fowles's world, this philosophy cannot
provide an answer to the question of why he is so
disturbed by the thought of his existence being purposeless.
The thought never occurs to Charles that the social cult
might be an illusion and existence still have a purpose, and
so, perforce, Charles gradually moves toward existentialism.
The gesture he finally decides to make is confession. He
goes to Dr. Grogan to "lay bare his soul" (Fowles 219).

We have already seen that Grogan occupies a dual
position with regard to the mythic pattern of the story. He
is both the father figure, Master of the Two Worlds, and the
tyrant Holdfast. Thus far his influence on Charles's heroic
quest has been benign, even, if unintentionally,
encouraging. In this scene he becomes the tyrant, the one
who stands in the way of the hero's union with the goddess.
Grogan is, of course, the only person whose opinions about
Sarah Charles listens to seriously. Once Charles has
confessed his involvement with Sarah, the doctor outlines
his opinion of the situation. He characterizes Sarah as a
victim of melancholia, "'In love with being a victim of
fate'" (Fowles 232), and assures Charles that she has been
leading him on by the pity he feels for her and that she
deliberately allowed herself to be seen on Ware Commons so
that she could throw herself under Charles's protection on
her subsequent dismissal from Mrs. Poulteney's service.
Grogan sees her as mentally deranged, and his character-
ization of her and her motives is plausible because
it is at least partially accurate. His analysis depicts Sarah's own conscious motives, her desire to gain, through Charles, a position in the social cult. It does not take into account the unconscious desire for freedom from that cult that she is gradually working toward. Grogan then forces Charles to confront his feelings for Sarah, causing the young man to admit reluctantly that he is obsessed with her. Finally he advises Charles to leave the situation in his hands, not to keep the appointment she has requested of him. Grogan will go instead and see that Sarah is taken to an asylum to deal with her problem. In all of this, the doctor presents an explanation and a solution to the problem that are socially acceptable and that prevent a union between Charles and Sarah. He acts as guardian of the social cult because he perceives Charles as a hero of that cult. To help reinforce his analysis of Sarah as an hysteric, Grogan gives Charles the account of the trial of La Roncière and the subsequent stories of hysteria recounted as evidence by Dr. Karl Matthaei.

The picture of Sarah as hysterical, as akin to the girls described in the trial account is, of course, repugnant to Charles, as it is intended to be, for the doctor's object is to prevent their union. Yet it also functions as another face of the goddess that Charles must examine. The descriptions of the hysterical girls "came as
a brutal shock to [Charles], for he had no idea that such perversions existed--and in the pure and sacred sex. Nor, of course, could he see mental illness of the hysterical kind for what it is: a pitiable striving for love and security" (Fowles 245). His first reaction to this shock is predictable; he feels that "Life [is] a pit in Bedlam. Behind the most innocent faces lurked the vilest iniquities. He was Sir Galahad shown Guinevere to be a whore" (Fowles 246). Here is his social role reacting in disgust to his allowing himself to be taken in and recoiling in horror at the picture Grogan has presented him. Yet Charles has grown, and on re-examining the passages on hysteria, he is forced to re-examine his picture of Sarah and his own behavior. He realizes that he has collaborated in the distasteful image of Sarah that Grogan has produced, for his account of her behavior was not accurate. "He [sees] fewer parallels now [in the trial account] with Sarah's conduct. His guilt be[gins] to attach itself to its proper object" (Fowles 246). Thus even this imaginary face of the goddess causes Charles to re-examine himself and to grow. His decision to meet Sarah after all is a way of finally taking some real action to combat the fatalism that has dogged him since the visit to Winsyatt. And, as every hero must, he is acting in direct disobedience of the orders of the tyrant, Holdfast. To win union with Sarah, he must combat and overcome the restrictions of the social hero cult.
We have seen that in many ways Charles is to Sarah as she was to Varguennes, and Charles's feelings as he makes his way to the old barn to meet Sarah identify him definitely with her. He starts on his way gloomily, suspecting himself of acting more out of despair than any nobler motives, rather like the despair he has seen in Sarah's eyes. As he moves into the Undercliff, he finds his gloom difficult to maintain in the face of the wild natural beauty all around him, just as Sarah's sadness seems eased by going there. Finally, however, he feels "in all ways excommunicated. He was shut out, all paradise lost. Again, he was like Sarah--he could stand here in Eden, but not enjoy it" (Fowles 250), and his paranoid feeling that even the trees and flowers are watching him is reminiscent of Sarah's earlier remark that she feels "'that even things--mere chairs, tables, mirrors--conspire to increase [her] solitude'" (Fowles 181). Clearly Charles is now in a position to better understand Sarah, cut off from the social place he aspires to, doubtful about his future, with little but his good name to cling to, and in danger of losing that.

The meeting at the barn, their final meeting on the Undercliff, again repeats, with increased intensity, the oscillating pattern between social and solitary heroic quests. When he arrives, Charles's memory of his night's reading leads him to half expect something terrible awaits him in the barn. He is his social self at this point, cut
off from the unconscious realm surrounding him. The sight of Sarah's helpless, sleeping form draws him briefly away from his social role. His feelings—the desire to protect, the suggestion of bedroom intimacy that the barn's privacy and Sarah's posture raises—are "dark depths," but they pass before he acts upon them. By the time she wakens and comes out of the barn, he is once again in careful control of himself, yet her appearance, denying as it does any hint of the hysteria he has read about, exploding, despite her strange circumstances, any possibility that Grogan's estimation of her as an hysterical is true, puzzles him. As usual when he is confused by her, Charles retreats into stiff formality, concern about being seen, neutral solicitude for her well-being. He chooses his words carefully to avoid giving her an opportunity to ask her disconcerting questions. Yet, as before, Sarah forces him to relinquish his stance. Just how much of Sarah's behavior here is consciously planned is, as usual, difficult to say. Certainly, she is more completely honest with him here than she has yet been, yet just as certainly she is still manipulating him, still testing him. Though she confesses to deceiving him about Mrs. Fairley's seeing her, she has waited to make the confession until he comes to her despite the two notes she has written to him. The confession confronts Charles with another aspect of her personality: she is perfectly capable of deliberately lying to him.
What control Charles had felt himself gaining now slipped from his grasp again. He stared down aghast at the upraised face before him. He was evidently being asked for forgiveness; but he himself was asking for guidance, since the doctors had failed him again. (Fowles 260)

The revelation of her deception strips away the last of Charles's social mask. In his mind it reduces Grogan's explanation of her conduct to rubble, and it forces Charles to look to Sarah for an explanation. To understand her mystery, he must rely wholly upon her. To come to know her, he must be guided by her. Her own explanation for her behavior is her mute declaration of her passion for him, and their kiss is the first action Charles takes that is wholly free from the constraints of the conventional heroic cult.

That Charles is briefly out of control here, free from society's concept of propriety, is reinforced by the imagery of the scene. The dominant images are fire and water, each the very essence of the chaotic, elemental unconscious. In an earlier scene, Charles has told himself that in getting involved with Sarah he is playing with fire; here, he thinks of Sarah's feeling for him as a fire he must quench, "but when one is oneself the fuel, firefighting is a hopeless task" (Fowles 259). Sarah's eyes are "all flame" (Fowles 259) as she looks at him. Part of the Catullan translation of Sappho's description of love that he remembers speaks of
"'thin fire steal[ing] through my limbs'" (Fowles 259). After her confession, Sarah weeps, and Charles feels "like a man beneath a breaking dam, instead of a man above a weeping woman" (Fowles 260). As he raises her to her feet, his eyes are locked on hers, "those wide, those drowning eyes" (Fowles 260). The passion between them is a flame that drowns him; even the mixed metaphor tells of the confusion of his mind.

He does not really understand the side of her personality that she presents. What is behind her eyes does not matter, and this lack of even desire for understanding partially explains why Charles pushes her away almost immediately. The union with the goddess should bring about the hero's final understanding of the knowledge that she stands for, yet here Charles has ceased for the moment even trying to understand. His abandonment of social custom is a step in the right direction, but the time is not ripe. This is also true for Sarah, who is not yet prepared to give up her hope that Charles is her way into the social hero cult.

Charles's abrupt reversion to his social self is aided by the appearance of Sam and Mary. Again the servants' free and easy relationship contrasts sharply with the agony and doubt between Sarah and Charles. The help they provide Charles is in allowing him to fumble his way back to his socially appropriate position of authority in dealing with
them. By the time they have disappeared down the path, Charles has had a chance to regain his equilibrium so that he does not plunge over the precipice he has been envisioning himself so near. As yet the elasticity of social law has only been stretched to its limits; he has not broken entirely free and is snapped back to his old self. When he returns to Sarah in the barn, after dismissing the servants, he is again stiffly formal. He offers the same advice he has given before: she should leave Lyme. This time she is willing to take it. Since it is actually sounder advice than Grogan's, which is to institutionalize her, Sarah's acquiescence here is another step in the right direction. The rest of this meeting is very subdued in tone. Charles tells her what she should do; Sarah, rather numbly, agrees. Yet in the end she challenges him again. As he makes to leave,

She raised her face to his, with an imperceptible yet searching movement of her eyes; as if there was something he must see, it was not too late: a truth beyond his truths, an emotion beyond his emotions, a history beyond all his conceptions of history. As if she could say worlds; yet at the same time knew that if he could not apprehend those worlds without her saying them . . . .

(Fowles 269)
Thus she reminds him that he has not yet come to understand her, that she symbolizes a knowledge he must gain.

Since this is their last meeting on the Undercliff, that place so symbolic of the unconscious realm, the question arises why have they not yet been sexually united? From Campbell we know that "The ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage . . . of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World" (109), and we have, of course, identified Sarah and Charles as the participants in this union, a union which takes place in the realm of the night of the unconscious. Yet here they are apparently leaving that realm ununited. The problem is that this story is not of just one heroic quest, but of two. Both Sarah and Charles are moving toward the boon of freedom from the constraints of their society. Their union must occur when it will cause awareness of that boon in both of them. Obviously, they are not ready. Campbell calls this union "The ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome." Ogres and barriers still clearly exist: Charles still cannot let go of his social role to allow such a union; Sarah has not yet seen enough of Charles's social self to give up the dream she attaches to him.
London

Charles's leavetaking of Ernestina follows and contrasts with his parting with Sarah. Nothing could be less like Sarah's dishevelled appearance than Ernestina's elaborate toilet. She is a "sugar Aphrodite" to Sarah's Calypso, and where Sarah is grateful, Ernestina is resentful. In the previous scene, Charles urged Sarah to leave; here, he himself wants urgently to leave. When Ernestina demands a kiss as "the price of his release," "No worlds fell, no inner roar, no darkness shrouded eyes and ears, as he stood pressing his lips upon hers for several seconds" (Fowles 273-74). Even the "distinct stir in his loins" (Fowles 274) that he does feel is hardly comparable to the overwhelming emotion he felt when kissing Sarah, and he is finally embarrassed by the time he is safely out the door and on his way to London.

Several days pass between Charles's and Sarah's last meeting on the Undercliff and the climactic night in Exeter. How each of them spends this time helps to show something of their progress on their respective journeys. Sarah spends her time in Exeter "enjoying the first holiday of her adult life" (Fowles 290). She is staying in a hotel on the edge of a "distinctly louche area of the city, notoriously a place to hide" (Fowles 284), in short, not the respectable side of town. For all she has left the Undercliff, Sarah has not really left the unconscious realm, a fact emphasized by
our only seeing her in Exeter at night. Yet Sarah's corner of this realm is, despite the dismal hotel, considerably more pleasant than Lyme and Mrs. Poulteney's house. In Exeter Sarah experiences a freedom she has never felt before, a freedom provided partly by Charles in that it is his money that allows her to have some leisure time and some comforts. The ten sovereigns he gave her

transform Sarah's approach to the external world.

... For days, when she first arrived in Exeter, she spent nothing, only the barest amounts, and then from her own pitiful savings, on sustenance; but stared at shops: at dresses, at chairs, tables, groceries, wines, a hundred things that had come to seem hostile to her. . . . This was why she had taken so long to buy a teapot . . . her poverty had inured her to not having, had so profoundly removed from her the appetite to buy that, like a sailor who has subsisted for weeks on half a biscuit a day, she could not eat all the food that was hers for the asking. (Fowles 289-90)

Sarah's time in Exeter, thus, is a time for her to become comfortable with freedom. She chooses where she lives and how much she is willing to pay; she chooses how to spend the money; she gratifies her own tastes and inclinations with her purchases. Having been made to appreciate freedom at
Marlborough House, she can now savor it fully. Yet Sarah has not given up her dream about Charles. In retrospect it is clear that she is here planning her seduction of him.

Charles has, meanwhile, been in London experiencing a far harsher bit of the initiation process. His progress, of course, is less advanced than Sarah's so that his experiences here correspond roughly with Sarah's few days of agonized indecision about whether to meet Varguennes at Weymouth as their several meetings on the Undercliff corresponded with the time Sarah spent with Varguennes during his convalescence. We have seen that the loss of Winsyatt deprives Charles of his primary calling in life; it leaves him only tenuously attached to the social cult by his engagement, about which he has been having doubts, and by the fact that he is still a gentleman, to which he clings desperately. At present he still has a definite place in society. He is a gentleman, a role that dictates his behavior, though it is not a wholly satisfactory role, rather like Sarah's position as governess to the Talbots. In London during his meeting with Mr. Freeman, Charles returns briefly to the world of common day to have a look at how his role fits into the social cult, a social cult that is changing. Mr. Freeman sums up the situation after offering Charles a partnership in his business, and he sums up in terms of Charles's pet theory:
"I would have you repeat what you said . . . about the purpose of this theory of evolution. A species must change . . . ?"

"In order to survive. It must adapt itself to change in the environment."

"Just so. . . . I have spent my life in a situation where if one does not--and very smartly--change oneself to meet the taste of the day one does not survive. One goes bankrupt. Times are changing, you know. This is a great age of progress. . . . Heaven forbid I should suggest that being a gentleman is an insufficient pursuit in life. . . . But this is an age of doing, great doing, Charles. You may say these things do not concern you--are beneath you. But ask yourself whether they ought to concern you." (Fowles 298)

Clearly, Mr. Freeman, despite his protests, feels that Charles's way of being a gentleman, idling along on his independent wealth, is indeed not a sufficient pursuit in life. As the narrator tells us, men like Mr. Freeman sought to redefine the term gentleman (Fowles 292), and here he has made it clear that a gentleman by his definition, the definition that is gradually coming into vogue, ought to have a hand in business. Up to the point when Mr. Freeman brings in evolution, Charles's response to the offer has been
to think to himself that "he [is] a gentleman; and gentlemen
cannot go into trade" (Fowles 298). He clings to the
definition of a gentleman that he has always known.
Freeman's words confront him with more implications of the
theory that he is convinced explain the way things are.
So devoted is he to this theory that he is led by Freeman's
logical application of it to feel "like a badly stitched
sample napkin, in all ways a victim of evolution" (Fowles
299). As so often before, Charles here pictures his life in
terms of a landscape. Earlier, with Sarah, he had felt on
the brink of a precipice, now within the social cult he feels
"as if he had traveled all his life among pleasant hills; and
now came to a vast plain of tedium--and unlike the more famous
pilgrim, he saw only Duty and Humiliation down there
below--most certainly not Happiness or Progress" (Fowles
299). Thus, the face of Duty in the social cult has changed
for Charles; it is no longer pleasant to contemplate.

Leaving the Freeman mansion at dusk, Charles plunges
back into the unconscious realm, as evidenced by the mist
which, as he proceeds on his way, "thickened, not so much as
to obscure all, but sufficiently to give what he passed a
slightly dreamlike quality" (Fowles 300). This is the realm
in which he must deal with the ideas and questions raised by
Mr. Freeman's remarks. Charles does, indeed, ruminate on
those remarks as he walks. Carrying through the analogy
with evolution, he feels himself a doomed dinosaur among
the swarms of lower class passersby. The sense of freedom provided by London's anonymity serves only to remind him that in his own mind he has no real freedom now that he has lost Winsyatt. He is nearly overwhelmed by a desire to escape the trap he feels himself caught in. Yet his own definition of a gentleman prevents such an escape; it is "so impractical, so romantic, so dutiless" (Fowles 303). Like Sarah's at the Talbot's, his position in the social cult is becoming gradually intolerable. He feels that "He should have rejected [Freeman's] suggestion icily at its very first mention; but how could he, when all his wealth was to come from that very source?" (Fowles 303). Charles's position is a complex one, for the social role to which he clings is here one of the very things that makes the social cult impossible for him. In a way, he has now not so much left society by deliberate choice as had the social rug pulled out from under him. So long as he has not chosen to leave society and find his own way, however, he remains trapped. So long as his rejection of Freeman's offer remains more based on "a mere snobbism, a letting himself be judged and swayed by an audience of ancestors" (Fowles 305), more on cowardice than on "a sense that choosing to be nothing . . . was the last saving grace of a gentleman; his last freedom almost" (Fowles 305), he is still not making his own choice. He is not choosing freedom for freedom's sake but because he feels expected to.
His retreat to his club is a movement further into the realm of the Underworld, the unconscious realm. This is clear from the companions he chooses and their choice of pursuits. Sir Thomas Burgh and Nathaniel are gentlemen of Charles's definition, the type that society is gradually, almost imperceptibly, but surely, leaving behind. Nathaniel is "the younger son of a bishop and a famous disgrace to his father" (Fowles 308-9). Sir Tom is a baronet . . . far too firm a rock for history to move. The immemorial pursuits of his ancestors had been hunting, shooting, drinking and whoring; and he still pursued them with a proper sense of tradition. . . his eyes had that splendid innocence, that opaque blue candour of the satanically fallen. (Fowles 309)

Clearly these two have the devil in them, fitting guides in the Underworld. The fact that Charles remains with them at all is unusual, a sign that he is not quite his normal self. The excessive drinking the three engage in further weakens their ties to the world of common day. Finally, the brothel they go to is certainly a most Freudian example of the unconscious; its satyrs and nymphs repeating in burlesque the ancient Greek theme that Charles has associated with this realm all along. Yet Ma Terpsichore's is merely a side eddy in the stream of the unconscious, and the girls there can hardly provide the union with the goddess that Charles
is destined for. The entire evening seems almost an attempt on Charles's part to force that part of his heroic quest. He tries again when he picks up the prostitute after leaving the brothel. This time his aim is quite specific. He stops for this particular girl because she reminds him of Sarah. Here is a substitute Sarah; he can spend a night with her and still not give up his cherished role as a gentleman; after all, a last fling—"His father had lived a life in which such evenings were a commonplace" (Fowles 317), and he had remained a gentleman.

Charles's time with this girl is a foreshadowing and at the same time a mockery of the night with Sarah in Exeter. The girl is like and unlike Sarah. She does not really resemble Sarah, though there is "just a tinge--something in the firm eyebrows, perhaps, or the mouth" (Fowles 318). She is deceitful like Sarah, though her deceit about her price is obvious, and like Sarah, she seems to read Charles's mind, in her case with regard to his concern about venereal disease. The girl's room, like Sarah's in Exeter, is shabby though clean and incongruously simple and plain considering "the luxurious purpose for which it was used" (Fowles 321). Like Sarah, this girl has been abandoned by a military man though, unlike Sarah, she is not still virgin. She is the image of what Sarah hints she might have become if she had gone to London. Finally, she lacks Sarah's intellect. When Charles asks her if she believes her present way of life is the best
way to get by, she replies that it is the only way she knows any longer, and she speaks "without much sign of shame or regret. Her fate [is] determined, and she [lacks] the imagination to see it" (Fowles 323). Unlike Sarah, this girl hasn't the capacity to imagine a life different from the one she lives, so she lacks Sarah's longing for such a life; she is not dissatisfied with her position. The description of Charles throughout this scene is coldly clinical, rather like the description in the scene of his proposal to Ernestina. His attitude toward the girl here is unemotional, their whole association quite businesslike. The narrator examines the scene and Charles's thoughts dispassionately, and the thoughts themselves are dispassionate, a great contrast to the turbulence of his feelings in Exeter with Sarah. By the time they get around to the real purpose of Charles's presence, he is no longer really interested. This is not the union with the goddess that will further his quest; only the real Sarah will do, and the fact that this girl's name is also Sarah only makes him sick.

Charles situation here is also analogous to Sarah's night in Weymouth. Sarah goes there fully determined to run off with Varguennes, to give in to his advances, to engage in sin. When she arrives, she finds she cannot go through with her plan, though she lets Lyme think she has, thus committing a kind of moral, psychological suicide. From Campbell we know that on the Road of Trials the hero must put
his ego to death in order to regain his true self (109), which is what Sarah appears to have done, but we also know by her subsequent behavior that she has not completely done this. Yes, she has in a sense killed off her former self, but her dream of still having a chance to enter the social cult shows that she has not completed the task. Her journey has only begun at this point. Charles, too, sets out on that night in London determined on a course of action, to enjoy a last debauch, to engage in sin, and like Sarah, he too cannot see it through when it comes to the point. In a similar way, as Charles realizes while he dangles the prostitute's child, "his behavior that night [has] been a mere vicious plunge into irresponsible oblivion" (Fowles 331), a "rejection . . . of his past and future" (Fowles 331), an attempt to kill off his ego. In a sense he does succeed partially, as Sarah does, for he feels "suddenly able to face his future, which [is] only a form of that terrible emptiness" (Fowles 331) that he realizes is behind the human illusion of time. His vision of his future as a trap, the vision that has been haunting him since Sarah reminded him of it in Lyme and has been exacerbated by Freeman's offer, is gone. He is free of it. Like Sarah also, however, his success is incomplete. His past--those ancestral voices whispering to him about what they expect of him, what a gentleman should do--remains with him and remains a powerful controlling force. In the end, the fact that he has not
actually gone through with his plan is a relief to him. He has remained true to his definition of a gentleman. Ironically, he has also resisted pressure from his past, for, of course, thoughts of his father and the ancestral traditions of his erstwhile companions are part of what drove him to his actions. Thus, his failure at playing the role of a rake is his passage of another test on his Road of Trials. He has begun to free himself from the trap of his ego, and he has acted, albeit somewhat involuntarily, to conform to his personal definition of himself rather than in accordance with exterior recommendations for his behavior. He is beginning to have a little practice at acting out of his own volition rather than purely out of a sense of duty to society.

Of course, by the next morning he has reverted to his dutiful self, having left behind the night of the unconscious with the dawning of the world of common day. His panic over the future has receded; thus he is no longer under pressure, and we have seen that high-pressure situations, for example when Sarah was missing in Lyme or even during his meetings with her in the Undercliff, are the times when Charles makes greatest progress, when he comes to realizations about himself. With the return of the everyday—a hangover, Sam bringing a pot of tea, order restored—"Life became a road again" (Fowles 334), his flashing illuminations about time and infinity and
precipices fading away. His letter from Dr. Grogan only reaffirms his regained sense of security. The meeting at the barn has not been discovered, and Grogan's advice is reassuringly conventional and comfortable. Yet he remains securely dutiful for a very brief space, for the next letter he opens is Sarah's three-word address. He burns the letter, but it preys on his mind. That consciously Charles fully intends to return directly to Lyme is clear from his resolute burning of Sarah's letter and his affectionate telegram to Ernestina and from his first thoughts on the train:

Charles had certainly decided, after his night of rebellion, to go through with his marriage to Ernestina. . . . As for Sarah . . . the other Sarah had been her surrogate, her sad and sordid end, and his awakening. (Fowles 342)

He clearly feels he has thoroughly exorcised her, yet (with Sarah there is always a "yet") her letter bothers him, reminds him of her, causes him to begin thinking of her.

Thoughts of Sarah provoke thoughts about his future in Charles's mind. The neatly traditional future he constructs for himself—or Fowles constructs for us—is distasteful to him—and/or sounds like cheating to us. For Charles it is "a distinctly shabby close" (Fowles 351) to his story. For readers it is decidedly ill-mannered of the narrator to evoke such interest in Sarah then drop her so
hastily. Even were there not over 100 pages still left in the novel, the ending would not be believable in light of the positions Sarah and Charles are left in: their heroic journeys half completed. However, Charles's tidy little invention does fit into its context, for he has begun his return to Lyme with the firm resolution of marrying Ernestina. His "official decision" (Fowles 351) has been made; he will renew his membership in the social cult. We have seen that this is typical behavior for Charles after an intense encounter in the unconscious realm. And, typically, having thought through his future as it is likely to occur in the social cult, he is dissatisfied. Also typically, this dissatisfaction is connected with thoughts of Sarah.

His construction of a fictional future for himself may indeed be nothing unusual, a habit we all have, as the narrator asserts, yet it is also reminiscent more of the way Sarah's mind works than of what is typical of Charles, especially when the elaborate nature of that fiction is coupled with the narrator's further comment that such "novelistic . . . hypotheses often have very much more effect on how we actually do behave, when the real future becomes the present, than we generally allow" (Fowles 350). Much as Sarah is in the habit of doing, Charles has here created a role for himself, and again like Sarah, this fiction will guide his future behavior. He appears almost to have adopted her habits of fictionalizing reality. He is becoming
like her, as might be expected, since all along he has been to her as she was to Varguennes. Like Sarah considering her future with the Talbots, Charles considers his with Ernestina and finds it intolerable or at least distasteful. And all this consideration is a result of his reaction to Sarah's letter, those three words that prey on his mind, putting the pressure back on, confronting him again with the face of the goddess. The letter
tortured him, it obsessed him, it confused him. The more he thought about it the more Sarah-like that sending of the address--and nothing more--appeared. It was perfectly in key with all her other behavior, and to be described only by oxymoron; luring-receding, subtle-simple, proud-begging, defending-accusing. (Fowles 351)
Clearly, Charles sees in Sarah the behavior of the goddess, luring him on, seemingly contradictory, requiring to be understood and accepted in terms of its own paradox. That he has begun to be able to identify this as characteristic behavior is a sign that he has begun to understand her. The intensity of the pressure it places on him also leads him to again realize his own position, comprehend the significance of her behavior in his life:

above all it seemed to set Charles a choice; and while one part of him hated having to choose, we
come near the secret of his state on that journey west when we know that another part of him felt intolerably excited by the proximity of the moment of choice . . . . what he felt was really a very clear case of the anxiety of freedom--that is the realization that one is free and the realization that being free is a situation of terror. (Fowles 351-52)

As on the night of the concert at Lyme, thoughts of Sarah have reminded Charles of his doubts about his future. As on the night in London at the other Sarah's, he has here become more aware that a lack of definite boundaries is frightening. More clearly than ever before, he is suddenly aware that what happens to him in the future is based on his own choice and that the criteria for that choice are for him to determine; he can either accept those laid down by the social cult or devise his own. And so he decides to stop the night in Exeter.

Exeter

His ruse of stretching his legs and attending evensong, transparent to the blackmailing Sam, recalls Sarah's story to Mrs. Talbot when she left for Weymouth. Much like the Lymers, Sam is not deceived. The climactic meeting at Sarah's hotel is in many ways typical of their previous meetings. Though not on the Undercliff, it certainly occurs
in the unconscious realm as indicated by the fact that night has fallen and by the growing chaos of the brewing storm. As usual, when he first arrives, Charles is all social propriety: "He had come merely to inquire; had hoped for a downstairs sitting room" (Fowles 355). But, as usual, Sarah controls the setting. She cannot come downstairs; she has sprained her ankle; Charles is "prayed to go up" (Fowles 355). Always she leads him on, deeper into the unknown than he is prepared to go. His following the maid upstairs foreshadows the very similar situation at Rossetti's house before their last meeting, connecting these last two meetings. They even climb to the third floor in both cases. Though both this and the meeting at Rossetti's are in most respects typical of their meetings, they are also thus different in that in both Charles is led to Sarah rather than coming upon her by chance or meeting her by agreement. In both, Charles is placed in the position of a caller; he is the one desiring the meeting. Interestingly, the mode of introduction, being led in and announced, is customary for his meetings with Ernestina. Sarah's assumption of ascendance in his life seems almost formally confirmed by the little ceremony even before Charles is aware of it.

This meeting is a coming together of the imagery and motifs from all their previous meetings and a foreshadowing of their last. It is the center of a web from which lines radiate to the rest of the novel. When he enters the room,
he discovers Sarah seated close to the fire, recalling the
description of her as all flame during their previous
meeting and hinting at events to come. We have already
remarked on the resemblance of her appearance to the earlier
description of a siren. For the reader, Sarah's deception
is revealed in the first moments of the meeting, though
Charles is, of course, too nervous to notice. We have
already seen her deliberate purchase of the length of
bandage and trial of the effect of her hair against the shawl
she wears. Now she refuses to see a doctor, and though
supposedly invalid is not at all pale, but pink-cheeked.
The unlikelihood of Sarah, so sure-footed on the rough
slopes of the Undercliff, actually being clumsy enough to
fall on the stairs is underscored both by the narrator's
pains to describe how commonplace an accident it is and by
Charles's comment that she should be "'thankful that it did
not happen in the Undercliff'" (Fowles 356). The fire is
even newly made up, a difficult task for a cripple, as though,
like Sarah herself, carefully prepared for his visit. The
"blackened patches on the ceiling--fumes from the oil lamp;
like so many spectral relics of countless drab past
occupants of the room" (Fowles 356), reinforce the fact that
they are in the Underworld.

Again, Charles begins by being stiffly proper and is at
a loss to provide an explanation for his presence, rather as
he was with the prostitute. And again, she draws him
gradually to abandon his position. He is first struck by her appearance:

as if all her mystery, this most intimate self, was exposed before him: proud and submissive, bound and unbound, his slave and his equal. He knew why he had come: it was to see her again. Seeing her was the need; like an intolerable thirst that had to be assuaged.

He forced himself to look away. But his eyes lighted on the two naked marble nymphs above the fireplace: they too took rose [like Sarah's nightgown] in the warm light reflected from the red blanket. They did not help. (Fowles 357)

Here again is the motif of nakedness, exposure, that has disturbed him all along in her presence. Here again he is struck by the force of the paradox she seems to him. The mystery that she is to him seems opened to him. He is on the verge of understanding her, as he must do. As earlier on the road past the Dairy, the effect of her face on him overwhelms him. The imagery of thirst recalls his very first impression of her with her sorrow welling up like a spring. The nymphs over the fire, rosy as Sarah's gown, reinforce her identity as the goddess, recalling Ernestina's teasing about his dallying with wood nymphs.

As he looks at her, as he begins to comprehend her, little by little, he begins also to understand himself. He
admits to himself that he has come out of an intense need to see her again as on the Dairy track when he looks back at her to test her effect on him. Further, as she weeps, he comprehended why her face haunted him, why he felt this terrible need to see her again: it was to possess her, to melt into her, to burn, to burn to ashes on that body and in those eyes. To postpone such desire for a week, a month, a year, several years even, that can be done. But for eternity is when the iron bites. (Fowles 358)

Thus, he is finally honest with himself about her, no longer hiding behind the conventions of propriety. Her next words, "'I thought never to see you again'" (Fowles 358), almost exactly mirror his thoughts in that uncanny way she has of seeming to read his mind. Literal fire brings them together as the fire in her eyes did at the barn. The fact that she expresses the same thought he has and that, despite her half-calculated grasp of his hand and the waiting in her eyes, her face seems "almost self-surprised, as lost as himself" (Fowles 359), indicates that the two of them are in exactly the parallel spots on their heroic journeys. Though she has planned this meeting, she seems nearly as surprised as he at how far things actually go, so that their union here is exactly timed to bring them both to a realization of their ultimate boon.
Each meeting has brought them nearer this moment, and each time at the crucial instant—her smile, the kiss at the barn—they are interrupted, and Charles returns to his social self. Now, too, he briefly tries to resist his feelings but cannot, and Sam is at this point unable to intervene. The imagery used to describe him here makes clear that he is free from social constraints:

He felt borne on wings of fire, hurtling, but in such tender air, like a child at last let free from school, a prisoner in a green field, a hawk rising. (Fowles 359)

Up to this point, the imagery describing Charles has been primarily social. He has been likened most often to men fulfilling very specific social roles, for example, a clergyman, a king, a judge. Now he is like a person set free from his role—a student out of school, a captive released—and like an animal, a hawk. Previously animal imagery has been associated exclusively with Sarah. Clearly, then, the imagery tells us that he is free; he acts out of his own volition. He is playing no roles, either of society's or Sarah's devising. Like Sarah herself, he has devised his own role. The use of the animal imagery definitely connects his sudden freedom with Sarah, but seems to imply less that Sarah gives him his freedom than that he gains it by becoming more like her. Their union is possible only when Charles is in a position analogous to the position Sarah pretends to
have been in in her story of giving herself to Varguennes, a position in which he makes a deliberate choice to break society's convention. Like Sarah's alleged choice, and really like her actual choice of letting Lyme believe a lie about her, Charles's choice here is made desperately, with no real conscious awareness that it has been made. Like Sarah, he realizes its significance only later. Now he is simply surprised to find that though

All lay razed; all principle, all future, all faith, all honorable intent. Yet he survived, he lay in the sweetest possession of his life, the last man alive, infinitely isolated. (Fowles 362)

But the freedom does not last long.

Already the radioactivity of guilt crept, crept through his nerves and veins. In the distant shadows Ernestina stood and stared mournfully at him. Mr. Freeman struck him across the face . . . how stone they were, rightly implacable, immovably waiting. (Fowles 362)

Only when he feels isolated, alone, is he free. The memory of even the existence of society is enough to reawaken his ties to the social cult.

We know that Sarah's and Charles's union will not take place until both are ready. Because the moment of union has finally arrived, we know that Sarah must now be in a position parallel to Charles's, and indeed she is. She is
now in reality in the position she described having reached at Weymouth. She is performing in reality the actions she claimed to have performed at Weymouth with Varguennes so that the freedom resulting from this event will be real rather than imagined, based on an actual happening rather than on a fictional creation. Matters are complicated to some degree by the role reversal in the situation. Sarah has relived the event from Varguennes's point of view. She has been the seducer, the one to make advances, the one who is not respectable. Charles has been the one taken in. She has engineered a recreation of events leading to that night, even to the fact that as Varguennes was at Weymouth for a few days before her arrival, so she has been at Exeter for a while before Charles arrives and has invited him to follow her. Her motives for this recreation appear, as we have seen, to be to relive that night but have things come out the way she wants them to, with Charles abandoning all to marry her and raise her to acceptability in the social cult. Yet, in the event, her recreation has had unexpected results. We have seen that she is surprised at her own boldness earlier. Perhaps she never intended things to go so far but allowed them to when Charles did not break down into a passionate declaration of love and proposal of marriage at first sight of her. Whatever the case, once his ninety seconds of passion have passed, Charles's reaction to the situation is still less than enthusiastic. His very
first remark--"I am worse than Varguennes" (Fowles 363)--makes his guilt feelings clear to Sarah, and the guilt is an indication that he has reverted to thinking in terms of the social cult. Were his resolve to marry her his own free choice, he would be determined to do so and brave social disapproval; she would be unable to dissuade him. Her attempts to do so test the strength of his resolve, and, of course, she succeeds in convincing him that she is unworthy to be his wife. To his credit, he is uncomfortable at being able to be convinced and deeply moved by the nobility she shows in insisting that he return to Ernestina as if nothing has happened. Indeed, her declaration, "'All I wish for is your happiness. Now I know there was truly a day upon which you loved me, I can bear ... I can bear any thought ... except that you should die'" (Fowles 364), goes far toward awakening in Charles the passionate declaration she has hoped for. He asks "'a day or two's grace. I cannot think what to do now'" (Fowles 365). Yet Sarah has been arriving at some realizations of her own. She still faces the night of the unconscious; union with Charles has brought no light of common day flooding into the tunnel. She has come to know Charles far better than he has come to know her even yet: "She had still a faint smile in her eyes, a deep knowing--a spiritual or psychological answer to his physical knowing of her" (Fowles 364). Charles's full understanding of her comes later; now he faces another test.
During the meeting on the Undercliff in which Sarah tells her story of her night at Weymouth, we remarked that Charles forgives her for her actions on the basis of his being able to imagine himself in Varguennes's position. He sees her then primarily as taken advantage of and dimly senses that he is as capable of taking advantage of her as the Frenchman was, so he forgives her. Yet as earlier noted, then he experienced an imaginary event, involving other people; now he is confronted with the same event but in reality, involving himself. That he realizes this is clear from his words; he is "'worse than Varguennes.'" So far he has, in a sense, forgiven her in that he still sees her as primarily taken advantage of and basically innocent. But the test is not over. He must see the other side of the goddess, the face that is not innocent. Thus, when he goes into the other room to dress, he realizes he has "forced a virgin" (Fowles 365); she has lied. He is not worse than Varguennes: he is Varguennes. He is not in an analogous situation, but in the actual situation of which her story and his reactions were only a prefigurement. Up to this point he has maintained a modicum of social decorum, even given unusual circumstances. He has done the socially decent thing in offering to marry her, in relieving her of his presence to preserve her from his reawakening passion, in begging time to consider what is the best thing to do under the circumstances. As we have said, he is his social self;
thus his first reaction to this discovery, to his full confrontation with this side of her personality, which has only been hinted at before, are typical of his social self:

She had lied. All her conduct, all her motives in Lyme Regis had been based on a lie. But for what purpose. Why? Why? Why?

Blackmail!

To put him totally in her power!

And all those loathsome succubi of the male mind, their fat fears of a great feminine conspiracy to suck their virility from their veins, to prey upon their idealism, melt them into wax and mold them to the evil fancies . . . these, and a surging back to credibility of the hideous evidence adduced in the La Roncière appeal, filled Charles's mind with an apocalyptic horror.

... She was mad, evil, enlacing him in the strangest of nets ... but why? (Fowles 365-66)

But there is hope for Charles yet, and it is in his persistently asking "why?" here. Unlike his feelings during the kiss at the barn when he felt that understanding her motives did not matter, here he is consumed by a desire to understand.

When Sarah enters, she answers his accusing looks by admitting she has deceived him. He asks, "'But what have I . . . why should you . . . '" (Fowles 366), and her response
makes clear both her conscious and unconscious courses of action. She tells him,

"You have given me the consolation of believing that in another world, another age, another life, I might have been your wife. You have given me the strength to go on living . . . in the here and now." . . . "There is one thing in which I have not deceived you. I loved you . . . I think from the moment I saw you. In that you were never deceived. What duped you was my loneliness. A resentment, an envy, I don't know. I don't know." . . . "Do not ask me to explain what I have done. I cannot explain it. It is not to be explained."

(Fowles 366-67)

Consciously she has, as we have said all along, been attempting to win for herself a place in society. She has been trying to make her dream, her aspiration, come true. From her words it is clear that this dream of entering the social cult has died. She knows it could only come true under completely different circumstances. Yet that part of her that longs for social acceptance has been consoled by their union, proof to her that she is not to blame for the fact that she does not fit in, that she can inspire the kind of love she longs for, and that circumstances, the circumstances created by society, are to blame. She is now free to go on with her life. She has attempted to create her
dream and failed, but in so doing she has gained real freedom from it and freedom from the role she created for herself at Lyme, for she is no longer an exile or outcast from the cult, but an expatriate. She has chosen to leave it, and her new position bears no reference to it, unlike her stance at Lyme. There she moved out of the cult out of a desire for revenge on its members. Her position had meaning to her only in reference to them. Now her position has reference only to herself and her own future.

The other reason, the unconscious reason, for her deception of him, her role as the goddess, she cannot explain to him. She offers him the same consolation she has, that her love for him has always been real. He must come to understand her on his own. His response to her inability to explain, "'I cannot accept that. It must be explained'" (Fowles 367), is a good sign of Charles's own progress. He has not, unlike Sarah, arrived at a full understanding of his boon during this climactic meeting, but he has been provided with all the information he needs to draw his own conclusions, and he now possesses the necessary determination to wrestle with what he knows until he arrives at what he must come to know. Her penultimate words to him here--"'There can be no happiness for you with me. You cannot marry me, Mr. Smithson'" (Fowles 367)--are conditionally and absolutely true. They are conditionally true in that in his present state of mind he cannot marry
her and be happy because he cannot reconcile himself to her deception, to the face she now shows. We know, of course, that in order to obtain his ultimate boon he must reconcile himself to this face so that once he has thought through the situation their marriage might be a possibility were it not for the absolute truth of her words as well. In an absolute sense, such a permanent arrangement as marriage is impossible as well, for unless the hero's boon is love itself, the hero/goddess union is not usually a permanent one. The hero leaves the goddess behind in the unconscious realm.² That they are not to remain together, that they are not one another's boon, is clear from the facts that Sarah is now resigned to giving him up and that Charles does not come to understand Sarah and the knowledge she stands for now in her presence but only later.

When Charles leaves the hotel, he walks out into the chaos of "a new downpour of rain" (Fowles 368). The storm, whose roiling clouds earlier symbolized his entry into the unknown realm, breaks while he is in Sarah's room (of course), and now its wild drenching reinforces the intensity and confusion of Charles's feelings. Charles "noticed it no more than where he was going. His greatest desire was darkness, invisibility, oblivion in which to regain calm" (Fowles 368). Thus, he plunges further into the unknown realm, attempting to find someplace to think out his
feelings, rather like Sarah going to the Undercliff. That he chooses a Christian church in which to work out his lesson about freedom from society is perhaps ironic, Charles's own theology being what it is, as well as rather appropriate, Christ being the ultimate iconoclast that He is. The major problem for thinking men in the Victorian age, the block over which every thoughtful person stumbled, one way or another, consciously or unconsciously, was the redefinition of God that began in earnest with the rise of Romanticism. If God were not what the Bible says He is, that changed everything. The structure of Western thought came tumbling down, and something else had to rush in to fill the vacuum. The problem was (and is) what is that something to be? Charles, being a relatively thoughtful person, is, here in the church, face to face with the sharply horned head of this dilemma. Having "never needed faith" (Fowles 370), Charles is already really in the camp of those who face the vacuum. He does not really want to be, as evidenced by his attempt to pray to the God of the church he has entered and his tearful despair at feeling unable to, despite clenched hands and Lord's Prayer. The specially composed prayer he offers up, dripping with self-pity and liberally sprinkled with first person pronouns, echoes around inside his own head, but cannot pass the barrier that reason, unaided by faith, unenlightened by revelation, has erected to enclose his mind. In this scene in the church we arrive at the
thematic crux of the novel, a symbol of the crux of the philosophical problem of the late Victorians.

In simple terms, the fundamental question that has been haunting Charles throughout the novel is on what basis should he live, what set of standards should guide his actions, with what can he fill the vacuum left by the absence of God? Most of his life he has acted on the basis of duty to his age, filled the void with conformity to standards laid down by generations of the collective ancestors of his own generation. He determines his own course of behavior by considering what would have been appropriate behavior for his father, his grandfather, and so on, and what would be considered appropriate by his peers, rather than by any set of standards he has formulated for himself. Since everyone else in society does the same thing, this method becomes the accepted social cult. Of course, Charles has seen himself as questioning the social cult all his life, but only with the advent of Sarah has he truly begun to question its validity in earnest. Here in the church he begins to realize the price of such questioning, a price that Sarah has already realized is bitter to pay. Here he can no longer ignore his position. His union with Sarah and his desire to understand what it means force him to choose his way. If he can understand Sarah, come to accept the paradox that she is to him, he will have the answer to his question. Yet Sarah herself, acceptance of her good and bad, her loving
and deceiving faces, is not really the point. What Charles must come to accept is what her two faces represent, the good and bad aspects of freedom. He must come to know that if he chooses freedom from society, he chooses something both desireable and difficult; his choice will have both positive and negative consequences, and he must accept both. It is the nature of freedom, symbolized in Sarah, that he must understand. His difficulty, like Sarah's, is theological. The difficulty is in accepting the nature of the god Fowles has set up for the fictional world of the novel. "There is only one good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist" (Fowles 106). As a definition of God upon which any sort of useful or even meaningful theology could be built, this is clearly worthless, as the statement is, for the most part, unintelligible. What does emerge from it, however, is that in the fictional world of this novel, freedom is of supreme importance. Thus Charles here struggles with the nature of "god." In terms of the monomyth Charles here begins the step Campbell labels "Atonement with the Father."

The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the
majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands—and the two are atoned. (147)

We have said that Dr. Grogan represents the actual father figure in the story, and so Charles must come face to face with him in order to complete this step; from Grogan he will attain assurance of atonement. Here in the church, though, in an imagined conversation, is where Charles actually glimpses his situation from a higher perspective and begins to realize that from the viewpoint of the infinite all the seeming paradoxes of his finiteness can be explained and understood. The narrator tells us that this dialogue is between Charles's better and worse self or between Charles and the figure of Christ on the church altar, implying perhaps that to Fowles they are the same. Because of what the voice causes him to realize, it can be identified as the voice of the father regardless of whence it proceeds. That the voice may be identified with Charles's own better self is less an obstacle to so understanding it than evidence of Charles's progress on his quest, for the final outcome of such a quest is to make the journeyer Master of the Two Worlds as the father figure is. He must become independent of the father, able to regulate his own behavior. Thus, if the voice is Charles's better self, it is evidence that Charles has begun to learn to be like the father and so
independent of him. The choice of Christ as the mediator of this message is, like the use of the church, at once appropriate and inappropriate. As a symbol of the father figure it is appropriate to the period and country of the story. The choice is made inappropriate by the mangled and wrenched misinterpretation of the gospel of Christ at which Charles arrives. That Charles does come to some valuable conclusions about the freedom from his age for which he strives is indubitable; the connection with the gospel, on the other hand, is dubious at best.

Leaving aside, however, the unorthodox theology, in which Fowles probably ought not to indulge since he tends to wrench things about unnecessarily, Charles's thoughts here record his arriving at a conscious realization of some of the lessons Sarah has been trying to teach him. Prompted by the voice of the father, a voice that echoes Grogan's in its sensibility and tenacity, Charles realizes that he must be free to make decisions based on his own convictions rather than those dictated to him by his society and his ancestors. If he marries Tina, he consigns them both to misery, sacrifices them to the Victorian sense of duty. If he breaks from the social system, he will be crucified by it, but free to make his own decisions. In making this break, he and others, like Sarah, stand for a time when people can be thus free without being crucified. His age has deceived him
in telling him that its way to heroism will bring him happiness when all it can really do is make him fit its system. It is not a pattern that takes individual personalities into account. He has been trapped not so much by Sarah as by his inability to break from the social cult and make decisions on his own, an inability caused by his feeling that he is being watched by his past and by his peers and is obliged to live up to expectations. As earlier he was freed from his apprehensions about the future, here he lets go of his fears about the present and especially the past. He realizes that he must act on his own, must do what he thinks is right. And in this case, that is to break his engagement to Ernestina and marry Sarah. Marrying Sarah becomes for Charles the symbol "for the pure essence of cruel but necessary ... freedom" (Fowles 377). Thus, though he has clearly progressed a long way on his quest, he has just as clearly not finished it, for its object, as we have seen, is not Sarah but what she stands for.

However, having become reconciled to Sarah's deception, Charles does now understand her motives more clearly:

He began to understand Sarah's deceit. She knew he loved her; and she knew he had been blind to the true depth of that love. The false version of her betrayal by Varguennes, her other devices, were but stratagems to unblind him; all she had
said after she had brought him to the realization was but a test of his new vision. He had failed miserably; and she had then used the same stratagems as a proof of her worthlessness.

(Fowles 379)

This is quite a clear understanding of her conscious motives for deceiving him, but it comes too late, since from her subsequent actions and words it is clear that Sarah has abandoned her hopes in this direction. Charles will realize the unconscious motives and purpose only when he stops mistaking Sarah for his ultimate boon.

Charles's break with the social cult is symbolized by his break with Ernestina, an action whose necessity is made clear by the fact that Charles's final atonement with the father is not completed by his meeting with Grogan until after the break has been made. However, Charles does not break with the one lady before providing himself some assurance of the other in the form of the letter and brooch he dispatches by way of Sam. The tone of the letter, bearing as it does "a little aftermath of the tone he had used . . . in letters from London to Ernestina" (Fowles 382), is rather ominous. It shows that Charles is beginning to have the same attitude toward Sarah that he has had toward Ernestina. He calls her "sweet" several times, implies that she is incapable of offering arguments with enough force to sway him, and talks of the many things he can give her as
though rather fulsomely aware of the honor he will be bestowing on her. He seems to regard her as a piece of property, and one he has already successfully appropriated despite his saying that "'nothing shall take [her] from [him] unless it be [her]self that wishes it so'" (Fowles 382). This last is a clear foreshadowing of later occurrences, and in the event, he does not behave in accordance with this assurance. He admits that "'something in [her] would fain say [he] know[s] profoundly; and something else [he is] as ignorant of as when [he] first saw [her]'" (Fowles 381). The "something else" is the problem. A part of Sarah remains that he yet does not understand, the part that she herself has only begun to be aware of there in Exeter, the part she tries to communicate to him when she sends him away that night and only finally explains later in London. Charles as yet only partially comprehends his position and his ultimate boon. He has mistaken Sarah for the freedom he must attain. His dream of marrying her is a partial compromise with society. It is the socially proper thing to do even if it is a sacrifice. One can even imagine a day when society would relent and accept Sarah, polished from travel abroad, intelligent, beautifully dressed, and legitimately married, into its close-serried ranks. But the path that Sarah has trodden and calls Charles to tread involves a sharp, clean break, not compromise. The brooch, originally intended as a
gift for Ernestina, and here dispatched as a test of Sarah's reception of his letter, is a typical device to allow for confusion and misapprehension. That it was chosen for Ernestina but sent to Sarah seems to symbolize the relatively easy substitution of one woman for another in Charles's mind. It is a gift for the woman in his life, whoever that woman may be. The legerdemain by which it comes to be Mary's is Sam's doing.

Sam

Thus far we have said very little about Sam, yet his heroic quest too is tangled in this story. Here where he becomes the unknown factor, the hand of Fate, in Charles's scheme, seems a good place to examine briefly his career. Unlike Charles and Sarah, Sam is a hero of the social cult; that is, his role and the progress he makes in society, if not the means of that progress, are typical and acceptable for the times and place in which he lives. Sam first emerges in the story as an example of a social type, a member of the Cockney class of the mid-19th century, a "generation of Cockneys [who] were a cut 'above' the Sam Weller types of earlier in the century" (Fowles 50-51). He is a "very fair example of a snob," that "new form of dandy" composed of "new young prosperous artisans and would-be superior domestics" (Fowles 51). Sam has "a very sharp sense of clothes style . . . and he [spends] most of his
wages on keeping in fashion. And he show[s] another mark of this new class in his struggle to command the language" (Fowles 51). Sam is, then, a social hero, playing out an acceptable role in the social cult. Even Charles, in the person of his social self, regards Sam so: "Charles knew very well that [Sam] was also partly a companion--his Sancho Panza, the low comedy that supported his spiritual worship of Ernestina-Dorothea" (Fowles 52). Yet Sam is also individually qualified to be a hero. He is handsome--"Women's eyes seldom left him at the first glance" (Fowles 140). He is also, as a hero must be, equipped with a deficiency (if one can be so equipped): "deep down inside . . . he was a timid and uncertain person--not uncertain about what he wanted to be (which was far removed from what he was) but about whether he had the ability to be it" (Fowles 140). Heroes of the social cult go through the same basic steps on their heroic journeys as heroes who break from the cult; those steps simply take socially prescribed and accepted forms. Thus Sam, plunged by Charles into the unknown realm of Dorsetshire, soon meets his version of the goddess and undergoes his Road of Trials.

Mary's identity as the goddess has already been established. Her personality and her effect on Sam underscore that identity. Mary's personality is the reverse of Sam's. Despite being at first a bit overwhelmed by him, at heart Mary has "a basic solidarity of character, a kind
of artless self-confidence, a knowledge that she would one
day make a good wife and a good mother; and she knew, in
people, what was what" (Fowles 141). In some ways she is
rather like Sarah, and Sam is surprised at "how many things
his fraction of Eve [does] understand" (Fowles 140). He
is first attracted to her by how very different she is from
London girls in whom he has met nothing but "a reflection of
his own cynicism" (Fowles 141). However,

What had really knocked him acock was Mary's
innocence. He found himself like some boy who
flashes a mirror--and one day does it to someone
far too gentle to deserve such treatment. He
suddenly wished to be what he was with her; and to
discover what she was. (Fowles 141)

Thus Mary is more than merely a reflection of himself, and
he wants very much to find out what she is like.
Furthermore, she causes him from the first to alter his
behavior. He is different with her, and appears to approve
the alteration since he wishes to adopt it permanently.
Finally, Mary possesses the self-confidence Sam lacks. He
can learn from her what he needs to make up for his
deficiency. He even finds himself telling her of his
ambition to become a haberdasher, and to his hopes, dreams,
and frustrations, this revelation of the unsuspected real Sam
beneath the surface,
Mary had modestly listened; divined this other Sam and divined that she was honored to be given so quick a sight of it. Sam felt he was talking too much. But each time he looked nervously up for a sneer, a giggle, the least sign of mockery of his absurd pretensions, he saw only a shy and wide-eyed sympathy, a begging him to go on. His listener felt needed, and a girl who feels needed is already a quarter way in love. (Fowles 142)

Mary understands him. Like Sarah's knowledge of Charles, Mary's knowledge of Sam is "divined;" she arrives at it by instinct and knows just how he needs her to react even before he, watching for signs that she thinks he needs a good laughing at, does himself. Sam's confidences go a long way toward winning this goddess for him as they tell Mary that her understanding and encouragement are necessary for him to realize his dream. They show that Sam is beginning to understand her as well, to realize that she is special, and that he accepts and trusts her for the person he is beginning to see she is, for Mary, as we have seen, is a bit intimidated by Sam, unsure that she will be acceptable to him after all the city girls he has known--"'All they fasional Lunnon girls, 'ee woulden want to go walkin' out with me'" (Fowles 143). But Sam accepts her as she is--"'if you 'ad the clothes, you'd do. You'd do very nice'" (Fowles 143)--appropriately dressed, she would fit in just fine. This
proviso of the right clothes might at first seem like a false step on Sam's part, a wish to change her instead of the acceptance the goddess requires until we consider that a change of clothes does not really change the essential person. Mary in a new dress is Mary still. Sam's own predilection for fashion also helps explain the remark as does the nature of their relationship. Since Sam's quest follows a socially acceptable pattern, the necessity of Mary's being properly dressed for her social position is quite reasonable.

Significantly, Sam's and Mary's relationship, part of the socially acceptable pattern, is not allowed to proceed farther without the stamp of that acceptability. The connection is brought to the attention of Mrs. Poulteney, who brings it to the attention of Charles, Ernestina, and Aunt Tranter during their thoroughly respectable call at her house. And while Mrs. Poulteney, that dragon of the social cult, does not approve, Charles, his social self at the moment, and Ernestina and Aunt Tranter, guardians, in their ways, of what is proper and respectable, do approve. Moreover, Charles forbids Sam any further contact with Mary until Aunt Tranter's permission for Sam's addresses has been formally obtained. Thus, Sam's heroic quest proceeds with society's permission and approval.

Like Charles's and Sarah's, Sam's and Mary's relationship grows and develops in the Edenic setting of the Undercliff, though, as Sam's and Mary's has received
official sanction their presence there is understandable and explicable, if not wholly approved, while Charles's and Sarah's is not. Sam and Mary have, in a sense, a "right" to be there, wandering the "de facto lover's lane," and they wander there openly, "young lovers as plain as the ashes were old trees" (Fowles 194). We have already seen the contrast between the two relationships here underscored by the fact that Charles and Sarah are all the while hidden behind trees watching the servants, Charles in an agony lest they be discovered. Mary's action at this point, running off down the hill, forcing Sam to chase after her, playfully reaffirms her identity as the goddess.

We hear little of Sam and Mary for quite a while after this, as the story focuses on the various events surrounding Charles's visit to Winside and Sarah's dismissal. When at last Sam reappears, we find him contemplating his future and his master's odd behavior on returning from Winside and receiving two notes from Sarah, the two trains of thought being connected, of course, by the effect the latter may have on the former. Like Charles, Sam is led to consider the future by thoughts of his version of the goddess:

The effect of Mary on the young Cockney's mind had indeed been ruminative. He loved Mary for herself, as any normal young man in his healthy physical senses would; but he also loved her for the part she played in his dreams. . . . Most
often he saw her prettily caged behind the counter of a gentleman's shop. From all over London, as if magnetized, distinguished male customers homed on that seductive face. . . . A kind of magical samovar, whose tap was administered by Mary, dispensed an endless flow of gloves, scarves, stocks, hats, gaiters, oxonians . . . and collars . . . . Sam himself was at the till, the recipient of the return golden shower. (Fowles 220)

Interestingly, Sam sees Mary exercising the same power on all the gentlemen of London that she does on him. More importantly, Mary has become an integral part of the ultimate boon Sam hopes to attain, the position in the cult that he dreams of rising to. Indeed, her presence in the picture underlines the fact that it is a dream, increasing Sam's frustration and motivating him to take some action to realize the vision. That she is the catalyst for his taking action is clear from the fact that, having put two and two together regarding both Winsyatt and the "'unfortunate woman'" (Fowles 221) Charles has just mentioned, Sam drifts directly from thoughts of Mary to thoughts of blackmail.

With this as his last thought, Sam again drops from sight until the morning of Sarah's and Charles's last meeting on the Undercliff when he and Mary surprise the guilty pair at the barn. Here Sam's intentions begin to
come more sharply into focus when he refuses the money Charles offers him to keep him quiet. "A look pased between master and servnat. Perhaps both knew a shrewd sacrifice had just been made" (Fowles 266). Having thus gotten the goods on Charles, Sam proceeds, when next he appears, to make cautious use of them. The morning after Charles's "last debauch," Sam broaches the subject of his intention to marry Mary and his dream of owning his own shop as the necessary improvement in means consequent to the acquisition of a wife. The servant hints that his master might be so good as to help him with the capital necessary for such a venture. The master enter[s] upon his first fatal mistake, which [is] to give Sam his sincere opinion of the project. Perhaps it was in a very small way a bluff, a pretending not even to faintly suspect the whiff of for-services-rendered in Sam's approach; but it was far more an assumption of the ancient responsibility—and not quite synonymous with the sublime arrogance—of the infallible master for the fallible underling. (Fowles 338)

He tells Sam he thinks the project a bad idea. Sam's disappointment is manifest. Charles offers his uncle's marriage and his resultant likely loss of Winskyatt as the reason for his pleading straightened circumstances. Sam feigns surprise. Charles orders secrecy.
"Oh Mr. Charles--you know I knows 'ow to keep a secret."

Charles did give a sharp look round at Sam then, but his servant's eyes were modestly down again. Charles wished desperately that he could see them. But they remained averted from his keen gaze; and drove him into his second fatal mistake--for Sam's despair had come far less from being rebuffed than from suspecting his master had no guilty secret upon which he could be levered.

(Fowles 339)

Charles assures Sam he will consider the idea; and in so doing assures him the hoped-for lever exists. Since Sam has already mastered the contents of Sarah's three-word letter by the simple expedient of a little steam on the envelope, he is now in a position to have some definite control over his own fate:

the marriage with Ernestina must go through; only from her dowry could he hope for his two hundred and fifty pounds; if more spooning between master and the wicked woman of Lyme were to take place, it must take place under [Sam's] sharp nose--and might not be altogether a bad thing, since the more guilt Charles had, the surer touch he became; but if it went too far . . . .

(Fowles 341)
We now return to Exeter, and the question of the brooch. Sam knows, of course, that Charles has been to Endicott's. Dispatched with Charles's letter and the package so flagrantly addressed to Miss Woodruff, Sam realizes "that his position [is] intolerable. How [can] he fight a battle without information?" (Fowles 383). We learn later, of course, that Sam never delivers the letter or brooch. What we know here is that he reports to Charles that there is no reply to the letter. Since Sam is certainly aware of the contents of the letter, given his penchant for reading other people's mail, why he would give Charles the impression that Sarah had accepted its terms is unclear since his object is to impede Charles's involvement with Sarah and promote the marriage with Ernestina. Yet Sam's apparent knowledge of Charles's intentions when his master goes to see Ernestina in Lyme later that day makes clear that he does know the letter's purport. Whatever the exact nature of the case, he certainly makes clear to Mary that he has thought of another way, besides direct blackmail, of attaining his ultimate boon, their marriage, and a better position in the world. He turns informer to Mr. Freeman.

Sam is a hero along the lines, if on a smaller scale, of Prometheus. He snatches his boon from the hands of fate, and
if the hero, instead of submitting to all of the initiatory tests, has, like Prometheus, simply darted to his goal (by violence, quick device, or luck) and plucked the boon for the world that he intended, then the powers that he has unbalanced may react so sharply that he will be blasted from within and without. . . . (Campbell 37)

Sam has not, of course, snatched up a boon for the entire world as Prometheus did, but only one for himself. Furthermore, since his action was against a rebel from the social cult, it is looked upon by the representatives of this cult, Mr. Freeman et al, as a service, and Sam is duly rewarded his boon, or almost. It seems only fair that he not get exactly what he wanted. Thus the powers that he has unbalanced by his action are on a modest scale in keeping with his modest boon. His own conscience is the main difficulty, for though his action is approved from without, he has betrayed a gentleman, his employer, who has really always treated him pretty well, so that, if not actually blasted, he is certainly pricked from within, especially when Mary tells him of having seen Sarah.

The unhappy thing about him . . . was that he had a conscience . . . or perhaps he had simply a feeling of unjustified happiness and good luck. The Faust myth is archetypal in civilized man; never mind that Sam's civilization had not taught
him enough even to know who Faust was, he was sufficiently sophisticated to have heard of pacts with the Devil and of the course they took. One did very well for a while, but one day the Devil would claim his own. Fortune is a hard taskmaster; it stimulates the imagination into foreseeing its loss, and in strict relation, very often, to its kindness. (Fowles 434-35)

Sam must somehow atone for his betrayal, and he does so by sending Sarah's address to Charles's solicitor, a small atonement with the father figure he has exchanged for Mr. Freeman, in keeping with his modest boon and modest rocking of the powers that be, and Sam and Mary disappear.

Lyme

To return, then, to Charles, we left him having sent the brooch to Sarah, gotten a seemingly positive response, and prepared to go break his engagement to Ernestina, all while still mistaking Sarah for the boon he is to gain. The scene with Ernestina serves to give Charles a sample of what lies ahead of him as a result of the path he has chosen, and things are touch-and-go with respect to the resolution of his choice for a while. When he arrives in Lyme, he is convinced that he has "burned his boats by sending that letter to Sarah" (Fowles 386). He feels his choice has been
firmly made, that he is prevented by the letter from backing down now, conveniently forgetting, of course, that he regarded his engagement to Ernestina in the same light as the letter only days before. The true test of his resolve comes when he is face to face with Ernestina. The crucial moment is when she realizes that he is serious about breaking off their betrothal: "If she fainted, became hysterical . . . he did not know; but he abhorred pain and it would not be too late to recant, to tell all, to throw himself on her mercy" (Fowles 388). Charles's decision was relatively easy to make alone in the church with only his own conscience to consult, only himself to justify it to. Facing Ernestina he is facing the society to which he has been dedicated for so many years; this is a personal rejection. Just as one of the tests of his acceptance of Sarah was to be placed in reality in a situation he had only contemplated abstractly before, so now with Ernestina. He has now to reject in concrete reality what he has before only given up in his thoughts. It is hard to say whose pain he is concerned about here, his own or Ernestina's, but whichever it is, the reality of the pain is what is important. It is his first taste of the unpleasant consequences of his decision; he must both cause and receive pain. Ernestina finally sets torch to his boats by not fainting or becoming hysterical at this point.
Ernestina's reaction to Charles's news is a tribute to Fowles's sense of fair play. She comes off looking rather better than Charles and better than one would expect her to. Hers is the defense of the social cult. In her explanation of her hopes and plans, the self-knowledge she displays in her admission of her faults, the perceptiveness of her estimation of Charles, Ernestina shines as a representative of what is positive about the society of which she is a product. Well might Charles be reminded of what he loses in giving her up. She emerges as a worthy goddess figure of the social cult. Clearly Charles understands her less completely than he thinks he does, and clearly she understands him better than he realizes. Her sudden comprehension of his true motives, that there is someone else, is a flash of intuition worthy of Sarah. That she eventually does collapse into the "catatonia of convention" (Fowles 395) is, perhaps, necessary since, this being Charles's story, we must leave the scene in some sort of sympathy with him despite the deception and cowardice he displays here.

Thus, with his boats alight, Charles returns to the White Lion after sending Grogan to Aunt Tranter's. There he is faced with another consequence of his decision— the loss of Sam, who responds to Charles's selfish disregard for his and Mary's plan by promptly burning his own boats, tendering his immediate resignation.
This was [Charles's] first taste of the real thorn-and-stone treatment, and he did not like it one bit. For a wild moment he almost rushed out of the White Lion—he would throw himself on his knees at Ernestina's feet, he would plead insanity, inner torment, testing of her love . . .

he kept striking his fist in his open palm. What had he done? What was he doing? What would he do? If even his servants despised and rejected him! (Fowles 399)

Here again is the reality behind the noble abstraction of his abandoning all for Sarah: he is rejected by all of society, even servants. Having discovered his freedom of choice, Charles now discovers the responsibility of choice—he must bear the consequences, consequences far more sharply painful than those of abandoning the quest and remaining in the social cult. The cruelest irony of all, of course, is that the reward he expects for his pain is not the one he will receive. Yet even now Sarah leads him along his way. Thoughts of her calm his panic. Even in her absence, she remains his guide.

By the time Grogan arrives, Charles is quite calm enough to bear the completion of his atonement with the father that their meeting represents. He must deal first with the doctor's wrath and must make full confession of his actions. The doctor's response emphasizes his role as a
father figure and Master of the Two Worlds—"'I wish I could remember what particular punishments Dante prescribed for the Antinomians. Then I could prescribe them for you'" (Fowles 405-6). He assumes the right to determine appropriate punishment for Charles and the punishment he fixes on is one depicted in Dante as divine, as determined by God, for those who set themselves above His moral law. When Charles says he thinks he will be punished enough, Grogan again assumes right of deity to determine punishment for sin; even his attitude in this instance, that Charles cannot be punished enough, is reminiscent of deity. To God, one sin is as sinful as another; one law broken is all laws broken. Charles attempts to soften the doctor's opinion of his disobedience, telling him "'I did not reject your advice without much heart-searching'" (Fowles 406). Grogan's reply cuts right to the heart of things: "'Smithson, a gentleman remains a gentleman when he rejects advice. He does not do so when he tells lies'" (Fowles 406). By his behavior Charles has forfeited his identity as a gentleman; his last tie with the social cult has been broken. At this point he does not accept this. He defends his lies as necessary. The doctor's reply is to confront him again with his ungentlemanly conduct, calling the union with Sarah the satisfaction of his lust. Again, Charles refuses to accept Grogan's estimate of his behavior; he "'cannot accept'" the word lust. Again Grogan's reply cuts to the heart: "'You had
better learn to. It is the one the world will attach to your conduct'" (Fowles 406). The world here, of course, is the society whose laws Charles has transgressed, and he has no choice but to accept its inevitable opinion of him. Again, Charles defends himself as attempting to be honest instead of hypocritical, the value of which defense the doctor does not dispute though he does object to Charles's "'embroil[ing] that innocent girl in [his] pursuit of self-knowledge'" (Fowles 406). Throughout their discussion so far Grogan has held Charles accountable to the system of values upheld by the social cult. The younger man is guilty of lying, lust, and hurting an innocent person. He is no longer a gentleman. Now Charles appeals to the doctor on the basis of another system of values; he asks, "'But once that knowledge [of self] is granted us, can we escape its dictates? However repugnant their consequences?'" (Fowles 406).

Charles's question, appealing as it does to a set of values different from that of the social cult, produces a struggle in the doctor between the Grogan who had lived now for a quarter of a century in Lyme and the Grogan who had seen the world. There were other things: his liking for Charles, his private opinion . . . that Ernestina was a pretty little thing, but a shallow
little thing; there was even an event long buried in his own past whose exact nature need not be revealed beyond that it made his reference to lust a good deal less impersonal than he had made it seem. (Fowles 406-7)

Grogan's reply is to consider Charles's behavior in light of a different law, one that transcends the social cult: "'I know only one overriding law. All suffering is evil. It may also be necessary. That does not alter its fundamental nature'" (Fowles 407), and their discussion from this point on is on a different level. The doctor has recalled the similar experience in his own heroic quest. He acknowledges that Charles's actions may have been necessary despite the pain they have caused. In effect, he admits Charles has left the social cult behind, that he is no longer to be considered a social hero but a solitary one. Charles builds on Grogan's statement to exonerate himself, claiming that only after the destruction of the old self can a new, better self begin to grow. This remark says quite a bit about Charles. First, the fact that it is to some extent true bears witness to his growth. He can discuss questions of suffering and evil truthfully and rationally, if not completely, with the father figure, the Master of the Two Worlds. They are closer to being equals. On the other hand, the remark also betrays the incompleteness of his quest. Charles has yet to
realize fully the nature of his boon and is not yet fully worthy of it. This is clear from the selfishness of his remark. Grogan referred to the suffering of others, in this case, Ernestina. Charles considers mainly his own suffering. He speaks of the ruins of his own old self upon which he must strive to build a new one, and certainly this is the hero's task, yet it should be accompanied by a corresponding growth in concern for others, as Grogan's has been. The Irishman refuses to allow Charles to forget the suffering he has caused Ernestina, the fact that his quest for self-knowledge has affected others as well as himself, and despite Charles's justification of that suffering as necessary and in the long run better, the doctor pronounces judgement on him. "'You have committed a crime. Your punishment will be to remember it all your life. So don't give yourself absolution yet. Only death will give you that'" (Fowles 407). Grogan does not hold Charles guilty of breaking the laws of the social cult by seeking self-knowledge. He does, however, hold the younger man responsible, pronounces him guilty, and declares his punishment, for breaking the transcendant law of the realm of the unconscious. Here, more than ever, Grogan is the father figure.

Having pronounced judgement, having insured that Charles knows he is accountable for his trespass, Grogan now relents some, and the Atonement with the Father can be
completed. Charles's reaction to the doctor's milder tone and shift of emphasis from Ernestina to Sarah makes clear the necessity and importance of this atonement.

As soon as Grogan had come into the room [Charles] had known that his previous self-assertions—that he was indifferent to the opinion of a mere bathing-place doctor—were hollow. There was a humanity in the Irishman Charles greatly respected; in a way Grogan stood for all he respected. He knew he could not expect a full remission of sins; but it was enough to sense that total excommunication was not to be his lot. (Fowles 407)

For Charles, knowing that Grogan does not utterly condemn him is vital. Charles has lost his respect for the opinion of his society; thus the loss of its respect for him bothers him far less than the thought of losing the respect of Grogan, the Master of the Two Worlds, the man who is what Charles strives to become, who represents all Charles has learned to respect. Thus, he is relieved that Grogan's reaction has not been harsher than it has. The two are reconciled. Grogan goes on to offer Charles a fatherly warning about the shadow of doubt that will fall on any future relationship with Sarah which Charles has already taken into account, but the doctor will not allow him to go on too sanguinely about it all. In the end, he warns him that the final judge of his actions will be Time.
"Time allows only one plea. . . . That the elect, whatever the particular ground they advance for their cause, have introduced a finer and fairer morality into this dark world. If they fail that test, then they become no more than despots, sultans, mere seekers after their own pleasure and power. In short, mere victims of their own baser desires. I think you understand what I am driving at--and its especial relevance to yourself from this unhappy day on. If you become a better and a more generous human being, you may be forgiven. But if you become more selfish . . . you are doubly damned." (Fowles 409)

Here is Fowles's moral philosophy in a nut shell. Just who is to decide whether Charles has become better and more generous and on what he is to base such a judgement remain mysteries. The characteristic flaw in Fowles's philosophy is that though he admits, indeed insists on, the necessity for morality, for moral judgement, he offers no basis upon which to build a morality. He seems to offer the question of suffering as a criterion--all suffering is evil--and yet he admits that suffering may be necessary, so that is an inadequate test. He says Time is to judge Charles, which seems to mean that people in the future will look back and decide, and yet different ages have different opinions of the
morality of past figures, so that too is clearly inadequate. The philosophical underpinnings of Fowles's fictional world appear inadequate. Fortunately for him, he is a good storyteller, so the flaws in the blueprint only emerge after careful consideration of the implications of what he says. For better or worse, the laws Fowles has set up for his fictional world are the ones we must deal with, the ones Charles must deal with as the doctor leaves him "alone with his medicine" (Fowles 409).
CHAPTER IV

RETURN

The hero's "return and reintegration with society" is the final stage of his journey (Campbell 36). Having gained his ultimate boon, the hero must emerge from the Underworld into the world of common day and take his place as Master of the Two Worlds in order to complete his journey. For Charles and Sarah this step begins when the night at Exeter ends. As we have seen, the night in Exeter is the moment of crisis when the boon of freedom is granted. All that remains is for each to recognize and grasp the boon and then make the return. Sarah does this quickly, but Charles has difficulty in recognizing and accepting his freedom, and since we do not see Sarah freed until Charles's struggle is nearly over, we will begin with him.

Having accomplished what he set out to do, Charles leaves Lyme to return to Exeter consoling himself for his recent pains with thoughts of Sarah and himself "in some jasmine-scented room . . . infinitely alone, exiled, yet fused in that loneliness, inseparable in that exile" (Fowles 411). He is still, of course, indulging in his mistaken notion that the boon he seeks is Sarah, but that notion is soon to be corrected. When he arrives at Exeter, his boon
is, indeed, awaiting him. Sarah has disappeared and left him his freedom. He is freed now from Ernestina and the ties to the social cult that she represents, but he is also free from the essentially socially conventional plans he has had for his life with Sarah. He has been granted his Ultimate Boon though he does not realize it yet.

The boon bestowed on the worshipper is always scaled to his stature and to the nature of his dominant desire. . . . the irony, of course, is in the fact that, whereas the hero who has won the favor of the god may beg for the boon of perfect illumination, what he generally seeks are longer years to live, weapons with which to slay his neighbor, or the health of his child. (Campbell 189)

In Charles's case, the boon is already fixed—freedom, it is what he has longed for all his life—but, like other heroes before him, Charles thinks he wants something else—marriage with Sarah. Clearly he does not yet understand his boon. He vows to find her, refusing his true boon and the return from the unknown realm. The entire time consumed by the search for Sarah, a matter of some twenty months, is a time for Charles to learn to understand and appreciate his unrecognized boon. The time corresponds roughly to Sarah's time at Marlborough House before the appearance of Charles.
The search for Sarah is ill-fated from the start. Though he has returned to London, Charles has really not left the night of the unconscious, as evidenced by the unfamiliar pursuits and companions he takes up. He hires detectives, a class of professional men "held in general contempt" and described by that mirror of public opinion, Punch, as "'go[ing] about got up as garrotter'" (Fowles 419). Clearly these are figures from the shadowy world of the unconscious. Charles himself haunts "the genteel-poor districts of London" (Fowles 420), helps "investigate the booming new female clerical agencies" (Fowles 420), and drives up and down the streets of the red-light district around the Haymarket searching among the prostitutes. Though he does not find Sarah, Charles does begin "to understand one aspect of Sarah better: her feeling of resentment, of an unfair because remediable bias in society" (Fowles 420). Even in her absence, Sarah lures him on to a better understanding of his boon.

As the search wears on, Charles also receives reminders that he is no longer a member of the social cult. As if to goad him on in his search, circumstances, in the form of a vengeful Mr. Freeman, force Charles to realize that he can never return to his safe niche in the social cult. The confessio delicti that Freeman demands he sign drives home to him that his "'conduct in this matter has been dishonorable, and by it [he has] forever forfeited the right
to be considered a gentleman’" (Fowles 425), and Freeman's intention to show it to any future prospective father-in-law Charles may have cuts Charles off from ever attempting to re-enter society and complete the social heroic quest. Even his solicitor, Montague, tells him "'My dear Charles, if you play the Muslim in a world of Puritans, you can expect no other treatment. I am as fond as the next man of a pretty ankle. I don't blame you. But don't tell me that the price is not fairly marked'" (Fowles 427).

Eventually, Charles gives up the search and goes to the continents. Like Sarah in the corresponding period in her life, Charles seeks mainly solitude. On his travels, he remains fiercely alone, snubbing his countrymen when he meets them, seldom taking up with any companion at all, preferring to wander about in a cloud of "self-riddling gloom" (Fowles 439) symbolic of the unknown realm he inhabits still. Indeed, in a sense he carries the unconscious realm with him; it expands to encompass the entire world as he learns to appreciate his freedom. He realizes that

When he had had his great vision of himself freed from his age, his ancestry and class and country, he had not realized how much the freedom was embodied in Sarah; in the assumption of a shared exile. He no longer much believed in that freedom; he felt he had merely changed traps or
prisons. But yet there was something in his isolation that he could cling to; he was the outcast, the not like other men, the result of a decision few could have taken, no matter whether it was ultimately foolish or wise. (Fowles 439-40)

He begins here to sound more and more like Sarah when she tried to explain herself to him on the Undercliff. Like her, he clings to his role as outcast, finding in it the self-definition he has lost in the social cult. The fact that he does not notice the similarity shows that he is beginning to make progress. His awareness of the nature of his boon is no longer inseparably tied to Sarah. He continues to advertise for her, but he begins to be increasingly unsure of the frontier between the real Sarah and the Sarah he had created in so many such dreams: the one Eve personified, all mystery and love and profundity, and the other a half-scheming, half-crazed governess from an obscure seaside town. He even saw himself coming upon her again--and seeing nothing in her but his own folly and delusion. He did not cancel the insertion of the advertisements; but he began to think it well that they might never be answered. (Fowles 441)

Gradually, in his mind he has begun to merge the many aspects of Sarah's personality that he has been confronted
with. He is, in fact, unsure how much of her he has created for himself. He has begun to see her as she sees people, as a character in a story. Just as she placed him in various roles, creating parts for him to play, so he has, he realizes, done the same with her, and he begins even to doubt if any of that construct is the truth. As Sarah came to be able to think of Varguennes without emotion, so Charles begins to contemplate a meeting with Sarah dispassionately. By the time he begins to consider going to America, Charles has pretty much given up hope of ever finding her, and he sets off across the Atlantic with a mind fully prepared to taste freedom, no longer imprisoned by his yearning for Sarah.

As he explores the unknown territory of America, Charles is charmed by two things: "the delicious newness of the nature: new plants, new trees, new birds . . . new fossils" (Fowles 445), and "the Americans themselves" (Fowles 445). He finds they have "a frankness, a directness of approach, a charming curiosity that accompanied the open hospitality: an naivety, perhaps, yet with a face that seemed delightfully fresh-complexioned after the farded culture of Europe" (Fowles 445). He comes to admire the attitude of the Americans, an attitude he notices especially in the women and that he associates with Sarah. So much is he reminded of her that he begins to think again of marriage and to look for Sarah among the fresh-faced Boston girls. Thus
he still connects freedom with Sarah, or we could say, Sarah still leads him to contemplate his boon. However, the more he travels in the vast unknown land, the more at home he begins to feel and the more he thinks about freedom without directly associating it with Sarah. He begins to master the unconscious realm as he once mastered the world of common day, taking up Grogan's role as Master of the Two Worlds. Gradually he finds that America has given him back a kind of faith in freedom; the determination he saw around him, however unhappy its immediate consequences, to master a national destiny had a liberating rather than a depressing effect. . . . A spirit of anarchy was all over the South; and yet even that seemed to him preferable to the rigid iron rule of his own country. (Fowles 447-48)

Yet before he can return from the unconscious realm to the world of common day, before he can truly grasp his ultimate boon, he must free himself completely from Sarah. Their final meeting is absolutely necessary to a completion of his quest. Thus, when she is found, he rushes back to London to "'question the Sphinx'" (Fowles 451) as Montague puts it.

Of the two endings Fowles provides, only the last functions to truly complete Charles's and Sarah's heroic quests as we have read them. If the ultimate boon in each case is freedom from the social cult, as seems clear from the
rest of the text, then only the second, open-ended, unconventional version of their final meeting fits with the story, so I will consider only it.

This final meeting serves to lead Charles out of the unconscious realm and into common day as well as to make clear Sarah's previously taken step from one to the other. The meeting occurs, in a sense, in both realms at once, for, of course, which realm each character is in is determined by his own psychological state rather than purely by his physical location. Charles remains in the unconscious realm until the end of the scene. Sarah is throughout very much in the world of common day, having left the unconscious some time previously as becomes clear from her words to Charles.

Sarah lives at an address in Chelsea; Charles "knew nothing of the area" (Fowles 452), and he approaches the house literally under the shadow of a cloud (Fowles 450). He enters the gate "with an inner trembling, a sense of pallor, a sense too of indignity--his new American self has been swept away before the massive, ingrained past and he was embarrassingly conscious of being a gentleman about to call on a superior form of servant" (Fowles 452). By the time he enters the house, he is again very much the man he was during other meetings with Sarah, conscious of his social role, a bit condescending to what he takes to be the maid who answers the door, alarmed by the implications of the presence of many paintings by a "notorious artist" (Fowles
of a disreputable modern school on the walls. He has reverted to his stiff formal self. Only when he can find a balance between his two selves, his American one and his English one, will he be truly Master of the Two Worlds, and he will achieve this balance during this final meeting. He asks to see Sarah by her assumed name, Mrs. Roughwood, and the moment is extremely reminiscent of his asking for her at Endicott's Hotel in Exeter. He has received the address, and nothing else, through the mail. Rather like Mrs. Endicott, the man who appears in the doorway examines Charles sharply with a manner Charles finds distasteful. As at Exeter so here he is led upstairs by a young woman, and as there so here he gains some information about Sarah's situation before he meets her. Unlike the other, however, this meeting is a complete surprise to Sarah; she has neither engineered it nor had time to prepare for it. For Charles, the whole meeting has a dreamlike unreality, as though he has entered the mythic realm he glimpsed on the Undercliff. His guide up the stairs is "sybilline" (Fowles 454). When he realizes whose house he is in, he is like "a man woken into, not out of, a nightmare" (Fowles 455). He begins to realize the foolishness of his assumption that Sarah needs rescue and is further shocked by Sarah's own appearance "in the full uniform of the New Woman" (Fowles 455) when he had expected to see her in her old indigo dress. Her appearance is "electric and bohemian" (Fowles 455); Charles thinks she
looks younger rather than older, as though the intervening years have not passed for her, and is reminded of the American girls he admires. Yet he is only shocked at this evidence of change in Sarah, and only a closer look shows him that "Those eyes, that mouth, that always implicit air of defiance... it was all still there. She was the remarkable creature of his happier memories--but blossomed, realized, winged from the black pupa" (Fowles 456). She has blossomed into the woman he dreamed of making her without his aid. The whole moment is a cruel disillusionment for Charles. She is not glad to see him, does not know of his broken engagement, is happy where she is. In fact, "he sensed that now their positions were strangely reversed. He was now the suppliant, she the reluctant listener" (Fowles 456). He is now about at the point Sarah had reached in Lyme when he turned up there and yet for him the moment also corresponds to Sarah's disillusionment about him on that fateful night in Exeter. Where Sarah has had two guiding figures, Varguennes, the herald, and Charles, the hero, Charles has had only one, both figures combined in Sarah.

As usual in their meetings, Sarah leads him further into what is for him the unconscious realm. Where before she has preceded him up the cliff to an amphitheatre, now she precedes him up another flight of stairs to a solitary artist's studio at the very top of the house. Throughout the novel, Sarah is very often associated with the arts, as
here with the artist's studio, before in the minute theatre, from the beginning with literature. Throughout she is the creative one, devising roles for herself and Charles, though by the end as we have seen, Charles too begins to think this way. So here he has cast himself in a role, and like Sarah in her self-made role as a reproach to society, he finds his role inappropriate:

He had come to raise her from poverty, from some crabbed post in a crabbed house. In full armor, ready to slay the dragon--and now the damsel had broken all the rules. No chains, no sobs, no beseeching hands. He was the man who appears at a formal soiree under the impression it was to be a fancy dress ball. (Fowles 458)

When Sarah had tried to explain to him the role she had taken up at Lyme, Charles did not understand because he had reverted to his social role; his mind was, in a sense, in the world of common day at that point, despite his physical presence in the Underworld. In much the same way here, Sarah "'[does] not know what to say,'" and is "without emotion, without any of the dawning gratitude he so desperately sought; with no more, in cruel truth, than a baffled simplicity" (Fowles 459), and she is so precisely because for her the house they are in is part of the world of common day. She is no longer wandering in the same realm
as Charles. He finds, indeed, that he cannot even address her in the terms of the unconscious:

He began to explain himself in a quiet voice; with another voice in his mind that cursed his formality, that barrier in him that could not tell of the countless lonely days, lonely nights, her spirit beside him, over him, before him . . . tears, and he did not know how to say tears.

(Fowles 459)

It is a problem he has had with Sarah before, as in the letter he writes to her at Exeter, "'a barrier in him,'" yet here it is clearly exacerbated by her refusal to encourage him, her refusal to address him in the way she has before.

Throughout this scene Charles struggles desperately to attain a balanced understanding of Sarah. He wrestles to reconcile the suspicions aroused in him by the company he has found her in, his "vision of some orgiastic menage a quatre," with the fact that "there was nothing orgiastic about Sarah's appearance; to advance the poet as a reference even argued a certain innocence" (Fowles 458). His difficulty is in matching his memory of her with the person he finds she has become. Again, the struggle is to integrate and understand the faces of the goddess and to learn from her the knowledge he must gain finally to complete his quest. And only when he can make her understand his position can he get her to help him. When he can finally overcome the barrier in
himself and speak to her honestly, he will also overcome the barrier between them, and she will speak more openly with him. In a sense, he must draw her towards the unconscious as she used to draw him, yet the test is still of Charles. Sarah will give him nothing until he, in effect, demands it of her. This he does when, after several ineffectually formal attempts to draw her out on the subject of her position in the household, he finally "turn[s] on her with a bitter small smile. "'I see how it is. It is I who have become the misanthropist'" (Fowles 460). By admitting honestly that he is now in the position she once occupied, he has demanded her help and made clear how she can help him. "She gave him a quick look, one not without concern. She hesitated, then came to a decision" (Fowles 460). Clearly, from her next words, her decision is to explain the reasons for her behavior on and since the night in Exeter. She can teach him only by her example what he must learn.

She tells him,

"I did not mean to make you so. I meant to do what was best. I had abused your trust, your generosity, . . . I had thrown myself at you . . . , knowing very well that you had other obligations. A madness was in me at that time. I did not see it clearly till that day in Exeter. The worst you thought of me then was nothing but the truth. . . . I have since seen artists destroy work that might
to the amateur seem perfectly good. I remonstrated once. I was told that if an artist is not his own sternest judge he is not fit to be an artist. I believe that is right. I believe I was right to destroy what had begun between us. There was a falsehood in it, a--. . . . I remarked a phrase of Mr. Ruskin's recently. He wrote of an inconsistency of conception. He meant that the natural had been adulterated by the artificial, the pure by the impure. I think that is what happened two years ago. . . . And I know but too well which part I contributed." (Fowles 460-61)

As we have seen, at Exeter she realizes that she cannot create her dream of entering the social cult, that such things cannot be artificially induced. That she was consciously attempting to do so is clearer than ever in her words here, and typically, she describes the realization in artistic terms. She is an artist who has destroyed a creation she began that was artificial, forced. Charles's immediate reaction is to blame himself for the "artificiality of conception," for his "hollowness [and] foolish constraint" in the face of her "substance and purity of thought and judgement" (Fowles 461). Both assumptions of blame are equally true. Each of them has contributed to the artificiality of their relationship, yet Charles has not yet fully realized the extent of his own contribution, for he
suggests that they take up the "natural and pure part of the conception" and continue it, a course of action that would only compound the error. To continue their relationship, especially on the terms Charles has in mind—their marriage—would be to add only further falseness, for theirs was never meant to be a permanent union; their boons are not one another, but the freedom they gain as a result of their brief union. Sarah has learned this on her own. Charles must learn it from her.

Her refusal to allow the resumption of the relationship brings to the fore again Charles's struggle to integrate the Sarah he knows with the Sarah she has become. Only when he understands her will he be able to understand her reason for refusing him. He interprets her response as a denial of the love she professed for him. In his mind she must be either the woman who loved him so tenderly at Exeter or the woman who has callously used him. They seem almost to have returned to the moment at Endicott's when he discovered her falsehood, as though he is given a second chance to play out the moment of crisis in which he comes face to face with the juxtaposed images of the goddess, with the seemingly irreconcilable opposites in her nature that he has been struggling with all along. As before, he creates a false dilemma here, insisting that her refusal to continue their relationship can only mean that she has never really loved
him, that she has only ever used him and does not "'care that his crime was to have shown a few hours' indecision, . . . that he has expiated it by sacrificing his good name'" (Fowles 462). Sarah's answer is to present him with a third alternative, that she has truly loved him but has changed, very much the same answer she gives to his accusations at Exeter. She assures him that if she were forced to marry, she would certainly choose him, proof that she esteems him and favors him. Then she explains the change in herself. She has learned to prize the solitude that had used to torment her. She says, "'I do not want to share my life. I wish to be what I am, not what a husband, however kind, however indulgent, must expect me to become in marriage'" (Fowles 463). She has also found a place in which she belongs, a role in reality, in the world of common day, that she can fill and that fulfills her.

"I am at last arrived . . . where I belong . . . I have no genius myself, I have no more than the capacity to aid genius in very small and humble ways. You may think I have been very fortunate. No one knows it better than myself. But I believe I owe a debt to my good fortune. I am not to seek it elsewhere. I am to see it as precarious, as a thing of which I must not allow myself to be bereft." (Fowles 463)
Charles's response to all this is typically contradictory. Her "contentions seemed all heresy to him; yet deep inside him his admiration for the heretic grew" (Fowles 463). It is the old story; the two sides of his nature, the social and solitary selves, war against each other, and that battle is objectified in his response to Sarah.

He saw London, her new life, . . . had now anchored her, where before had been a far less secure mooring, to her basic conception of life and her role in it. Her bright clothes . . . were no more than a factor of her new self-knowledge. . . . He saw it; yet would not see it. (Fowles 463-43)

He tries again to convince her to marry him because he does not believe her explanation, refuses to accept her decision. She tries again: "'. . . I am not to be understood even by myself. And I can't tell you why, but I believe my happiness depends on my not understanding'" (Fowles 464). Charles calls her refusal of him an absurdity, and she counters, "'I refuse . . . because you cannot understand that to me it is not an absurdity'" (Fowles 464). Here is the heart of the matter. He cannot yet understand her and precisely because he will not. He simply refuses to accept her explanation of herself. "He felt like someone denied a fortune by some trivial phrase in a legal document" (Fowles
465), and so long as he still regards Sarah as the fortune to be gained, he will never understand. Thus, Sarah's next move is to reduce her desirability. She admits to having known of his advertisements and his broken engagement. As in Exeter, here Charles is directly confronted with Sarah as a liar, a side of her personality he has hitherto conveniently explained away as evidence of her nobility of purpose, yet a side of her that he must acknowledge as inseparable from her. She is not the glorified creature of his dreams, but a woman who has made a quest of her own and has emerged changed but not perfect and certainly not a perfect wife for Charles. She is implacably herself, and he must deal with that. Her strategy has its desired effect.

He followed her with his eyes. And perhaps he did at last begin to grasp her mystery. Some terrible perversion of human sexual destiny had begun; he was no more than a foot-soldier, a pawn in a far vaster battle; and like all battles it was not about love, but about possession and territory. He saw deeper; it was not that she hated him more than other men, but that her maneuvers were simply a part of her armory, mere instruments to a greater end. He saw deeper still: that her supposed present happiness was another lie. In her central being she suffered still, in the same old way; and
that was the mystery she was truly and finally afraid he might discover. (Fowles 465-66)

Her admission that she has known nearly all along of his attempts to find her and has not responded to them finally drives home the fact that she truly no longer wants to marry him, that she is as she says she is. Layer by layer he penetrates to the heart of the mystery that she has learned to live with, though she cannot comprehend it. Part of her will suffer always the loneliness she has always known, and for her, freedom lies in giving up the attempt to assuage it.

Charles's angry outburst at this point is rather like Grogan's rage with him earlier. Finally he is acting as Master of the Two Worlds, condemning Sarah for the pain she has caused, regardless of its necessity. He even pronounces an eternal punishment as Grogan did. Unlike Grogan, he will not be reconciled with her before he leaves. He is not a father figure to whom she must atone. Yet she will not allow him to forget that she does care for him, pointing out that under the circumstances her refusal is the kindest thing she can do. Charles responds,

"There was a time when you spoke of me as your last resource. As your one remaining hope in life.

Our situations are now reversed. You have no time
for me. Very well. But don't try to defend yourself. It can only add malice to an already sufficient injury." (Fowles 477)

Their positions are, indeed, exactly reversed, and as Sarah did before him, so now he must learn to cope alone. He must be free of her. Her last detaining smile, with its implication of the possibility of "a Platonic--and even more intimate, never consecrated--friendship" (Fowles 478) is a last test. As before it gives Charles a feeling of nakedness,

but to him far less a sexual nakedness than a clinical one, one in which the hidden cancer stood revealed in all its loathsome reality. He sought her eyes for some evidence of her real intentions, and found only a spirit prepared to sacrifice everything but itself--ready to surrender truth, feeling, perhaps even all womanly modesty in order to save its own integrity. And there, in that possible eventual sacrifice, he was for a moment tempted. He could see a fear behind the now clear knowledge that she had made a false move; and that to accept . . . would be to hurt her most. (Fowles 478)

She has offered him the opportunity to inflict unnecessary pain, and he refuses as she knew he would, not out of high motives of preventing suffering, it is true, but out of the
knowledge that he could not live with such an arrangement. He passes the final test, not merely because he chooses not to inflict pain—that is merely incidental in relation to his real motive for the refusal of her offer—but because he has chosen for himself. He has made a decision about his future with reference only to what he can live with. He is free of the social cult, and he turns to go, to leave the world of the unconscious and return to the world of common day.

His emergence into daylight is clear in his feelings at the gate of the house. "It was as if he found himself reborn, though with all his adult faculties and memories. But with the baby's helplessness—all to be recommenced, all to be learned again!" (Fowles 479). And as he walks along the river embankment, the narrator tells us that "he has at last found an atom of faith in himself, a true uniqueness upon which to build" (Fowles 480). He realizes that life is "to be, however inadequately, emptily, hopelessly into the city's iron heart, endured" (Fowles 480). And we end with the figure of a man, staring out at the water.

Charles's and Sarah's ends are not triumphant or even particularly hopeful despite their having gained their freedom. In the end, what they learn is that the world is not entirely bounded by the views of their society, that the picture of the world drawn by Fowles's Victorians is not entirely accurate, does not take into account some facts of human nature that they have encountered in themselves and in
each other. They have, indeed, gained freedom from the strict confines of the accepted wisdom of their time and place, which are, we must recall, even narrower than those of real Victorian England, as their world is Fowles's creation, only a reflection of some facets of a real time and place. Yet the question remains: what have they escaped to? If they have escaped to a wider vision of the world, to a perspective that allows them to perceive the truth about themselves and the world as they are apart from the constructs of any particular society, then they are heroic indeed. If, however, they have merely exchanged the views of one place and time for those of another, then we can rightly question the value of their final position.

No society can ever have a wholly accurate view of the world, human heart and mind being what they are, and I question whether one society's view is really better than another's. Each is merely blind in a different direction. This may be what Fowles means, in part, by the horizontality of things, but I don't think he has any idea that there is, once for all, truth behind it all and beyond it all. What Fowles has done for Sarah and Charles is to remove their Victorian coats and leave them standing naked in the cold wind of the existential abyss created by modernism. To the extent that they have not donned the modernist's coat to keep out the wind, they are, perhaps, still capable of grasping at truth. To the extent, however, that they have
accepted that abyss as truth and adopted modernist methods of dealing with it—the final mysticism in their attitudes toward the despair each feels, that blind faith in the notion that life must be endured with no answers, and that such endurance is somehow heroic and brave—they have merely exchanged one social cult for another. They have become good existentialists, stoically patting themselves on the back for not killing themselves when they really have no reason not to.

Yet, perhaps I ask too much in thinking that Sarah and Charles could learn to see transcendant truth about the world. For in their world, the one Fowles has built, there is no room for such truth. Fowles, himself, is bound by the myths of his own age—existentialism, a Darwinian kind of scientism, philosophical materialism, to name a few. Thus, truth for him is modern truth, and there's the rub. Ultimately, The French Lieutenant's Woman offers no answers to the modernist despair it ends with because for its author the despair seems to be the answer. Finally, the novel is as much a portrait of the philosophical wanderings of early modern man as anything else.
NOTES

1This kind of alteration in the basic outline of the monomyth is common. Campbell remarks that "Differing characters or episodes can become fused, or a single element can reduplicate itself and reappear under many changes" (Campbell 246).

2That this is true is clear from several stories Campbell relates, for example the story of the five sons of Eochaid, king of Ireland, on pages 116-18.
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