I do not know. This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind. If I have pretended until now to know my characters' minds and innermost thoughts, it is because I am writing in (just as I have assumed some of the vocabulary and "voice" of) a convention universally accepted at the time of my story: that the novelist stands next to God. He may not know all, yet he tries to pretend that he does. But I live in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes; if this is a novel, it cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word.

A taste for narrative contrivance similar to the ones that afflict Marcel and Monroe Stahr produces a recurrent tension between John Fowles and his story in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Despite all his proclamations, concessions, and apologies, Fowles harbors an ill-concealed proclivity for the innocence of pre-*nouveau roman* fiction. His uneasiness, however, with the conventions and attractions of omniscient narration weaves the fundamental webbing of the novel; he formulates a diachronic narrative that superimposes his modern perspective over the Victorian action. Throughout the novel Fowles intersperses documents from the Victorian era and commentary from twentieth-century viewpoints. These interruptions of the story's progress, together with his lamentations over the artifice of fiction and with the narrative contortions produced by his misgivings, estrange the action in Brechtian fashion. Periodically, Fowles takes time out from his story to inventory his dilemmas. As he suggests in the passage that keynotes this chapter, Fowles shares Pinter's mistrust of presumptuous writers, and the reflec-
tions that follow this passage are particularly reminiscent of Pinter's sensibilities; "Perhaps you suppose that a novelist has only to pull the right strings and his puppets will behave in a lifelike manner; and produce on request a thorough analysis of their motives and intentions" (p. 81). The characters and their actions, according to Fowles, will occasionally assert themselves contrary to the novelist's fixed plan because, however diverse or impure the motives of a writer, "Only one same reason is shared by all of us: we wish to create worlds as real as, but other than the world that is. Or was. That is why we cannot plan" (p. 81). Thus the tension between artist and creation dominates the novel, focusing the author's role as fabricator and underscoring the issues of freedom and choice.

The issue of choice, its significance for Fowles, his characters, and even his readers, evolves finally into a pair of alternate endings for the story: the first of which prescribes a fairytale reunion of Charles and Sarah, and the second of which observes their autonomous defiance of this imposed narrative convention. In the second ending, Fowles reflects on his own artifice, accentuates the capricious nature of his characters' chosen fates, and confronts his readers with ambiguities for resolution through their own prejudices. This last effect returns to the reader a responsibility for enclosure of the story, since Fowles provides only possibilities and leaves the reader to select from these according to his or her own subjectivity. Because this device functions to envelop the reader in the thematic crisis of the story, and because it coincides so perfectly with Pinter's own aesthetics, the screenplay needed to make some accommodation of this final narrative ambiguity. By selectively including, excluding, and, ultimately, transforming the structural and thematic preludes to Fowles's dual endings, Pinter manages to approximate the problem of contingency intrinsic in the story's conclusion.

Fowles's adoption of this structural conceit, however labored its anachronistic evocations of Thackeray, remains consistent with the concerns of the story. The problem of choice is central to the novel, both within the story and outside of it, as a persistent theme in the narrator's commentary. Indeed, the principal contrast between the Victorian Age, during which the action of the novel transpires, and our own era, from whose perspective Fowles writes, consists in the displacement of authority by freedom; in writing, as in life, choice has become prominent where obedience to convention served in the past. Although Fowles's story examines the beginning of this movement toward freedom, his ultimate subject lies in the modern ramifications of our emancipation from Victorian conformity and order. These ramifications are rendered in Fowles's external narrative, a component that is at once indispensable
to the character of the novel and unsuitable to the medium of film. Neither Fowles nor anyone who became associated with the proposed filming of the novel would encourage an adaptation that could not account for the refractive significance of the narrative.

Another problem with *The French Lieutenant's Woman* was what one critic called its stereoscopic vision, the fact that it is written from both a mid-Victorian and a modern viewpoint. None of the directors who worked on it ever wanted to dodge the 'diachronic' dilemma, though they came up with many different solutions. Nor, incidentally, did any of the producers. As one studio head of production put it to me, he was profoundly uninterested in buying a latterday Victorian romance when there were hundreds of the genuine article—and from the most formidable corpus of writers in English fiction—lying about out of copyright and to be had for nothing.¹

Conceding that the inclusion of a narrator figure in the film version proved a popular solution of this problem and that he had once subscribed to this proposal, Fowles finally rejected the idea as unfeasible; on screen, such a device would prove awkward and time-consuming. Consequently, the challenge of translating the novel into film lay in devising some radically divergent scheme that would compress the novel's bulk and express its format in cinematic language.

In its accommodation of these requirements, Pinter's screenplay is ingenious. His adaptation, possibly inspired by his work on self-referential incongruities in *The Last Tycoon*, preserves the diachronic tension through an original and uniquely cinematic conceit that contrasts the relationship of the Victorian characters with that of the actor and actress who portray the roles. In his foreword to the published screenplay, Fowles approves this approach; "I do not think of the present script as a mere 'version' of my novel; but as the blueprint . . . of a brilliant metaphor for it" (p. xii). Through the alternating episodes of Pinter's dual storylines, the "stereoscopic" impact of the novel retains its force and implications. Every component of the film exists simultaneously in two "realities"; temporal doublevision presides over our perceptions of character, plot, and setting. The nature of Pinter's construct draws attention not only to the temporal themes of the novel, but also to the artificial mechanics of craft, remaining true in both of these respects to Fowles's work.

Pinter's adaptation animates and intensifies certain facets of Fowles's text while diminishing the presence of others. His embellishments and his deletions, naturally, correspond to the inherent qualities of his medium and to the peculiar inclination of his own aesthetic. Thus, Pinter capitalizes on Fowles's repeated indications that the characters wear manipulative masks and that they contrive their words and actions for
particular effect on others. From this theme and from the self-conscious quality of the narrative, Pinter invents the specific device of the film-within-a-film to convey the temporal refraction of the novel. The artifice of acting saturates every moment of the film: extending, by virtue of its conspicuousness, even into the scenes between the “actors,” Mike and Anna, whom we recognize as distinct from the actors, Jeremy Irons and Meryl Streep. In its simultaneous evocation of three levels of reality, this whirligig recalls the earthquake sequence from *The Last Tycoon* and leads us directly into the phenomenological vertigo of Genet. Everything is pretense; we are condemned to see only constructs of reality. The self-referential episodes of both novel and film reveal the presence of artifice and suggest its complicity on all levels of the action. Ultimate reality is hidden from all; just as the present qualifies the past, the author qualifies the book, the actor qualifies the role, and the self qualifies itself and other, we can see one thing only through the context of another. This condition is the substance of Pinter’s world, where nearly everything becomes a product of guesswork and invention, and almost nothing exists as autonomous fact.

In the first words of his novel, Fowles reduces the process of scrutiny to the game of speculation; “a person of curiosity could at once have deduced several strong probabilities about the pair who began to walk down the quay at Lyme Regis” (p. 9). From his vantage point, far away in time and space, the narrator takes careful stock of the various deceptions of viewing angles and distances: deceptions that are characteristic of Pinter’s style. The problems of insight and verification extend even into the narrator’s perception of himself, inducing momentary objectification of his own person, even as he reconsiders some tentative deductions about the strange pair; “On the other hand he might, focusing his telescope more closely, have suspected that a mutual solitude interested them rather than maritime architecture” (p. 10). This diagnosis of relationship, gleaned through the lens of a telescope, posits a condition of mystery and impenetrability that afflicts each of the major figures in the novel. Indeed, the emblematic telescope will become closely associated with Charles, a paleontologist, who is presently an object of its scrutiny. Finally, the difficulties posed by the act of interpretation receive emphasis in the last paragraph of the opening chapter, as the telescopist notes the presence of a third figure on the quay, whose actions are less explicable and whose nature less scrutable than those of the mysterious pair.

Beyond his advancement of the theme of inscrutability, Fowles devotes his first chapter to an exegesis of the phenomenal world of Lyme Regis. The extraordinary geological and botanical composition of the
coast, along with the temporal permutations of its inhabitation, provide a significant background for the action. This setting, as Fowles explicates it, acquires emphatic features of geography and time, due not only to its peculiar topography and his temporal doublevision, but also to its paleontologic wealth. Presiding over the story, this amplified setting establishes a context and scale for human struggles. Our first glimpse of the diminutive figures, Charles, Ernestina, and Sarah, equates them with their environment through the opaque quality of Fowles's rendering, while it simultaneously subordinates them in relation to the magnitude of their surroundings and to his apportionment of text, here. In his description of Lyme Regis, Fowles initiates a thematic counterpoint between the dynamic of inexorable change and the continuance of underlying nature. Thus, he stresses the relative immutability of the geography in contrast with the innumerable alterations of the town. Relative, however, is the operative word, as Fowles unifies the counterpoint in the shared characteristic of inertia. Degeneration is omnipresent in the novel: the planet as well as its civilization undergo a gradual process of decay.}

The Cobb, "a long claw of old gray wall that flexes itself against the sea" (p. 9), becomes the initial emblem of a conflict between human and natural forces. "Primitive, yet complex, elephantine but delicate," the magnificent rampart has endured seven hundred years against English history and the sea, but it stands in marked contrast with the fickle, declining village and the massive, precarious cliffs of the coast: "It is in this aspect that the Cobb seems most a last bulwark—against all that wild eroding coast to the west" (p. 10). This heroic artifact has survived centuries of inconstant seas and disintegrating shoreline to protect generations of civilization against the course of nature. In Fowles's view, however, the Cobb warrants attention not because it exemplifies, but because it defies the dynamic of its environment. Erosion and chaos reach epidemic proportions in the narrative, attacking the fabric of Victorian society and the face of the phenomenal world. However apparent his parallels between the course of civilization and the process of inertia, Fowles sees human activity as a strategy for escaping this condition. "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" (p. 165). As Charles enumerates them here, each of these conventions exists as an instrument in the human quest for stability and comprehension in a world that remains finally unstable and incomprehensible: "For it was a less profounder reality he
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seemed to see than universal chaos, looming behind the fragile structure of human order” (p. 192). Phenomenal mysteries pervade all layers of the novel, becoming manifest not only in the narrative proper, but also in prefatory excerpts from Darwin and in Charles's thoughts and activities as a paleontologist. Through these reiterations Fowles conjures a view of his subject that transcends the bifocal myopias of his one century temporal eclipse.

Thus Fowles's subject is not merely the erosion of Victorian morality glimpsed from the perspective of modern disenchantment, but the gradual decay of all configurations, noumenal and phenomenal, under the force of an inscrutable teleology. The Victorian era, in all its formal and fragile ordering, serves as a metaphor for the artifice of civilization through all ages. Environments in the novel alternate between two prototypes: treacherous, chaotic exteriors and suffocating, composed interiors. Later in the story, when Charles stands at Dr. Grogan's window, Fowles observes, “He felt himself in suspension between the two worlds, the warm, neat civilization behind his back, the cool, dark mystery outside” (p. 123). All human impositions of structure, the novelist's conventions, society's restraints, selfhood, otherhood, and Dr. Grogan's study, become false devices for insulation against nature.

Fowles's particular choice and particular depiction of the Victorian period on the precipice of collapse accentuates his concern with the contrivance of fictions in all these aspects of existence.

The limitations of the cinematic medium forced Pinter to abandon this transcendent dimension of Fowles's temporal amplifications. Locations failed to produce terrain capable of expressing the novel's geologic arguments, and the lengthy narrative invocations of Darwin proved unaccountable on film. Presumably because he found no adequate accommodation of this dimension by his medium, Pinter diminished its presence to occasional contextual shots of animals and landscapes, and to minimal depictions of Charles as a paleontologist.

Although he partly sacrifices Fowles's rendering of changes as simultaneously sweeping and inconsiderable, significant and insignificant, Pinter evokes a comparable sensation from the connotations of the filmmaking process; he erases the gaps between the two periods of his action (the story of the characters and the story of the “actors”) by revealing the identical constitution of their natures. The parallax view of the same things from two vantages in time receives fresh significance from Pinter's conceit. Altered only by superficial adaptations, the same settings and beings comprise both worlds; the past becomes absorbed in the present, an effect merely of its trappings. Thus, the irony of Fowles's long view undermines all the shocking juxtaposition between
The ramifications of Pinter's innovation, his contribution of the film-within-a-film conceit, are manifold. We have noted that it faithfully materializes a legacy of problematic concerns from the novel: the scrutiny of subject from two points in time, the self-referential attention to matters of craft and medium, the obfuscations of behavior produced by the artifice of human role-playing, the portrayal of the past as a construct of the present, and the compression of a century's elapse in time. A closer examination of Pinter's screenplay, its conformations with and deviations from the Fowles source, will reveal its operation in these and further respects.

Pinter devotes his first set-up to establishment of the film-within-a-film conceit. Through his first shot, "A clapperboard. On it is written: THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN. SCENE 1. TAKE 3" (p. 1), he focuses the mechanics of cinematic illusion, directing attention to the behind-the-scenes labors of technicians and artifices of process. "[The clapperboard] shuts and withdraws, leaving a close shot of ANNA, the actress who plays SARAH." In the screenplay Anna "is holding her hair in place against the wind," but the film, as directed by Karel Reisz, substitutes a hand mirror as the emblem of her cosmetic efforts. Although the introduction of the mirror cleverly anticipates subsequent uses of mirrors and other devices to convey an omnipresent awareness of mask, both of these initial images of Anna make radical distinctions between her restrained character and that of Sarah, whose solitude and abandon are the subject of the succeeding shot. Later, certain of Sarah's qualities and circumstances will be identified with those of Anna, but the shock of this first impression emerges from their dissimilarity. As Sarah, dressed in black, begins her perilous walk to the end of the Cobb, off screen voices shout the technical jargon of shooting procedure. The sequence concludes in the mysterious image of Sarah, motionless except for the whipping of her garments in the wind, staring out to sea.

Through two devices of structural montage, this initial scene also comes to signify a fragmentation of the narrative that originates in the novel. Fowles's sequence of action is digressive, so that the story emerges largely through leaps forward and backward in the chronology of events. Thus, he compounds the temporal refractions outside the story with temporal liberties within its development. Because Pinter lacks Fowles's resources for complex narrative linkage among events, the screenplay generally rearranges the plot into cause-effect sequence. Karel Reisz compares this restructuring of the novel with the serial
progression of Victorian novels: “Our story takes place in fifteen little self-contained leaps, each of which contradicts what happened previously.” The predictive, contradictive, contextual, and thematic functions of Fowles’s discontinuous action take shape chiefly through Pinter’s reciprocity between the Victorian story and its modern counterpart: a topic for subsequent discussion. Principles of montage independent of the film-within-a-film conceit, however, also contribute to Pinter’s suggestion of discursive, fragmented time. The juxtaposition of the first scene with the second and the possibility that this opening sequence and a later episode represent continuous action, despite an interval of thirty-six unrelated scenes, resemble the temporal permutations of the novel. Conventional arrangement and experience of linear time are rendered false, replaced by an artifice that exposes the convention as an inadequate expression of artistic and empirical codes.

The second set-up lacks temporal orientation with respect to the first. Pinter transports us, without explanation, into the interior of Charles’s hotel room at the Cups, in Lyme. Cinematic convention indicates a simultaneous or sequential time frame in such cases, but Pinter’s preceding denotation of time is confounding, and later sequences seem to characterize this sequence as a flashback. In these respects both the first and the second scenes are suspended in time, awaiting future qualification and imitating the novel’s temporal dislocations. Period decor, however, suggests that we are now moving deeper into the story of the film, isolating Sarah in her watchful solitude on the Cobb as the omnipresent mystery that she does indeed pose.

Fowles, also, begins the recounting of his story by discarding his telescope and immersing himself in its revealed world. Like Pinter, he strips away the initial artifice and distance, and slips into the confines of the fiction. The novel, however, unveils its story from the scene on the Cobb, withholding until later any account of the backgrounds of these figures who visit it. By interrupting the continuity of the Cobb narrative, Pinter effects a meaningful suspension of Sarah, as well as a hiccup in time that actually revises the sequence of the novel to reflect the chronology of the story.

Pinter’s reorganization of the narrative for the sake of cinematic intelligibility includes bolder story perimeters and cause-effect relationships than those in the novel. In Charles’s hotel room, Pinter locates a precise beginning for the story, and he expedites formulation of its concerns by interpolating material from later situations in Fowles’s account. The screenplay prescribes that Charles, surrounded by scientific instruments and books, examines a fossil through a microscope. This image evokes some degree of the novel’s concerns with prehistoric amplification and
telescopic magnification, while it additionally associates Charles with practice of paleontology. The paradoxical qualities of the fossil, its rigid and fragile representation of life form, and the paradoxical qualities of paleontology, its constipated and ecstatic view of existence, will be later transferred to Charles, himself. Because Charles remains a rather passive figure in the novel, the screenplay revises his character to render it more dynamic and dramatic. Karel Reisz worried about this change, noting that Charles's initial "chilly, forbidding . . . manners-ridden behavior might alienate audiences from his plight." Charles's aptitude for enlightenment, however, is predicted in our first glimpse of him as, for now, we note that he whistles as he works.

Pinter capitalizes on the situation in this second set-up to introduce another of the novel's significant themes: the deteriorating artifice of social class. A secondary plot, which traces the romance and upward mobility of Charles and Ernestina's servants, Sam and Mary, will become the principal vehicle for this theme in both novel and screenplay, aligning the collapse of class structure with decay on other levels of existence. In this scene Pinter adumbrates the tension between servant and master through Charles's impatience with the inattentive Sam. Unable to summon his servant by calling, Charles must leave his work to search through the window for Sam.

Charles's view from the window, ultimately obtained through a symptomatic telescope, reveals two impressions. The first consists in a preponderance of animals, clogging the marketplace and serving to recall Fowles's invocations of Darwin as well as Pinter's distinctions between the vital past and the sterile present in The Pumpkin Eater, The Go-Between, and The Proust Screenplay. Our second impression is of Sam, the ambitious womanizer, "walking between horses, and treading with distaste over horse dung, the bunch of flowers in his hand" (p. 2). Although Sam claims to Charles that he intended the flowers for the house, we have already witnessed his efforts to press them on a young girl in the market. Charles, however, overlooks these minor insubordinations, and announces his intentions to visit Miss Ernestina.

The montage of scenes that follows this episode depicts Charles's proposal of marriage to Ernestina. Several contrasts emerge from this sequence, including the juxtaposition of Charles's "urban" habitat with Ernestina's open landscapes and the difference between Charles's language addressing Sam and that directed to Ernestina. Again, Pinter takes his cue from Fowles, who remarks on Charles's chameleonic discourse and links this diversity with his multiple masks. "Charles, as you will have noticed, has more than one vocabulary. With Sam in the morning, with Ernestina across a gay lunch, and here in the role of
Alarmed Propriety . . . he was almost three different men; and there will be others of him before we are finished” (p. 118). Ultimately, Pinter will convert Fowles’s indications of masked behavior into the artifice of performance evoked by the film-within-a-film; in this instance, however, he materializes Fowles’s suggestion through the contrast in Charles’s dialogue during the two scenes. Compare, for example, the following speeches, drawn first from Charles’s address of Sam and then from his address of Ernestina:

I’ll shave myself this morning. Breakfast! A double dose of muffins. And kidneys and liver and bacon. [P. 3]

Ernestina, it cannot have escaped your notice that it is fully six weeks since I came down here to Lyme from London. [P. 6]

Pinter follows up this hint of the acting that underlies behavior by providing Charles and Ernestina an audience for their engagement. Sam, Mary, and Mrs. Tranter, Ernestina’s aunt, eavesdrop on the scene in the conservatory from various vantage points in the house. Their reconnaissance produces the multiple and self-interested points of view that typically afflict perception in Pinter’s work, while it also develops the characters of those involved in the sequence. Mary, who seems to enjoy a superiority over her mistress similar to the kind that Sam exerts over Charles, is now paired with Sam in the kitchen. As they look on in anticipation of securing their own future, Ernestina declares war on two more conventions of the Victorian world; she announces her intention to marry Charles regardless of her father’s wishes. This defiance of filial and female subjugation is emphasized in the film, where Pinter’s line, “Papa will do what I want” (p. 7), is supplemented by the admonition, “And I will do what I want.”

As Charles and Ernestina seal their vows with a chaste kiss, Pinter interrupts them by a piece of shocking montage. Abruptly, the scene changes to a hotel room, early in the morning, in 1979; “Dim light. A man and a woman in bed asleep. It is at once clear that they are the man and woman playing CHARLES and SARAH, but we do not immediately appreciate that the time is the present” (p. 8). The romantic connection between Sarah and Charles will occur much later in the screenplay; they have not even met at this point in the action. By anticipating the relationship between Sarah and Charles through the interpolation of this scene between Anna and Mike, Pinter evokes the future as a context for developments in the Victorian story. This peculiar narrative structure resembles Brecht’s habit of revealing plots in advance for the purpose of deflecting audience attention onto situations other than story. Fowles, also, solicits a skewed reading of his novel by
complicating the narrative through interpolation, retraction, and prediction of material, and Pinter contrives the screenplay to replicate this process. Both Fowles and Pinter, through different means, plant the attachment of Charles and Sarah long before it occurs; Fowles begins his story by describing Charles's encounter with Sarah on the Cobb, and Pinter inserts this scene announcing the affair between Mike and Anna. In each case the romance between Charles and Ernestina unfolds beneath the prediction of Charles's ultimate attraction to Sarah, although Pinter's predictive mechanism does not violate the chronology of the narrative.

This suggestion that we perceive, or reperceive, information only as it conforms to a known or predictable eventuality comprises a major premise of Pinter's work generally, and it is fundamental to Fowles's novel. Not only does Fowles structure his narrative by repeated reference to various future contexts, but he also occasionally offers the problem as a subject.

Fiction usually pretends to conform to the reality: the writer puts conflicting wants in the ring and then describes the fight—but in fact fixes the fight, letting the want he himself favors win. . . . But the chief argument for fight-fixing is to show one's readers what one thinks of the world around one—whether one is a pessimist, an optimist, what you will. I have pretended to slip back into 1867; but of course that year is in reality a century past. It is futile to show optimism or pessimism, or anything else about it, because we know what has happened since. [Pp. 317-18]

Thus, as Pinter's idea of the film-within-a-film indicates, the past is always subject to reconstruction according to the nature of the present. Fowles and Pinter stress this condition by their approaches to the story, but they imbed the tendency toward interpretation manipulated by future contexts, attained or predicted, in the core of the story, as well. In this manner Charles's efforts to understand Sarah's behavior are always contaminated by his own expectations or by subsequent events; he is forever misconstruing her actions or reperceiving them in terms of some extrinsic context. Fowles communicates Charles's dilemma through internal monologue; for Pinter this conveyance lies partly in the attempt by Mike and Anna to conform and interpret their relationship according to the prescriptions of the fiction. In turn our cognition of the fiction is partly determined by the predictive activities of Mike and Anna.

In both novel and screenplay, the locus of suspense shifts slightly from outcome to process, since certain future dispositions of the action are forecast. This shift, however, is restricted to developments within the story, as the final resolution is problematic in both versions. Since Fowles provides multiple choice endings for his novel, the action never
obtains the clarity of final enclosure. As we have noted, this frustration afflicts the reader with a relevant inability to realign the expatiations of the story according to its ultimate revelation. Pinter also emphasizes the ambiguity of outcome through the device of the present time plot; he endangers suspense by making the choice of an ending for the script a matter of dispute and by depicting the uncertain efforts of Mike and Anna to imitate the idealistic fiction. Neither account, Fowles nor Pinter, provides the assurance of an enclosed construct, although both suggest its primacy to the understanding of events.

Adumbration operates as a principal cognitive device in both renderings of the story. Fowles accomplishes it through leaps ahead in his narrative, and Pinter manages a similar qualification of developments by exhibiting their course in the present time scenes. The screenplay’s interruption of Charles and Ernestina’s betrothal by this prediction of Charles’s infidelity recasts our perception of their relationship. The information not only reforms our impressions of preceding events, but also will alter our assimilation of subsequent developments. Thus, without violating either the chronology or the superficial manifestations of Charles’s relationship with Ernestina, Pinter introduces Charles’s inexpressible impatience with her triviality and his unconscious need for the profound mystery of Sarah; the betrothal is qualified by a forecast of doom. The pattern of anticipation at this level is consistent with the parallax formed by our view of the past looking forward, framed by the present looking back.

Subsidiary themes emerge from the qualities linked to each of the two periods in time. Fowles, of course, explicates these differences through his narrative ruminations, noting, for example, that the great-great-granddaughter of the servant Mary is one of today’s most celebrated movie stars. Such an idea not only harmonizes with Pinter’s deployment of movie-making as a metaphor for our era, but it also delineates the sharp contrasts between the rigid castes of Victorian times and the freakish mobility of today. Pinter captures these disparities through the juxtaposition of past and present milieux and of masked and unmasked characters. When the “actor” portraying Sam, for example, and the “actress” portraying Ernestina play a duet on the piano during a party for some of the film’s cast, we glimpse an idea of social upheaval that simply compresses Fowles’s musings about Mary’s great-great-granddaughter.

The initial impact of the hotel room scene is similar: Charles’s daring liberty of a chaste kiss with Ernestina is followed instantly by Mike’s casual involvement in a sexual relationship with Anna. Although Pinter intends the temporal shift to occur without immediate identification, a
modern telephone appliance begins to ring before much can develop from this ambiguity. The telephone, in all its resonance as an index of contemporary technology, anonymity, alienation, and disembodiment, conveys the first jolt of the shift in time. Its efficiency, artlessness, and emptiness find counterparts everywhere in the ensuing scene. Anna and Mike, whose very names have lost the phonetic richness of their Victorian alteregos, Sarah and Charles, are barely articulate; their dialogue proceeds chiefly in monosyllables and expletives.

A telephone rings.
MIKE turns, lifts receiver.
MIKE. Yes? (Pause.) Who is it? (Pause.) Yes, it is.
(Pause.) I'll tell her.
MIKE puts the phone down, turns on light, wakes ANNA.
MIKE. Anna.
ANNA. Mmmn?
MIKE. You're late. They're waiting for you.
ANNA. Oh God. [P. 8]

The calibre of language in this exchange lends credence to the supposition that Shakespeare dangled Juliet out of Romeo's reach on her balcony at least partly to engender articulate speech. Pinter clearly links bankrupt idiom with the advent of freedom from historical restraints.

From the text of their dialogue, we glean other clues to the character of modern life; an obsession with schedule distinguishes the present time from the past, and an anxiety over appearances unifies the two periods. The former concern, apparent in the hurried pace of most present time scenes, has an explicit source in Fowles's novel.

The supposed great misery of our century is the lack of time; our sense of that, not a disinterested love of science, and certainly not wisdom, is why we devote such a huge proportion of the ingenuity and income of our societies to finding faster ways of doing things—as if the final aim of mankind was to grow closer not to a perfect humanity, but to a perfect lightning flash. But for Charles, and for almost all his contemporaries and social peers, the time signature over existence was firmly adagio. The problem was not fitting in all that one wanted to do, but spinning out what one did to occupy the vast colonnades of leisure available. [P. 16]

Automobiles, helicopters, telephones, and schedules dominate the mise-en-scene of Pinter's depictions of modern life. In certain respects, however, the two periods exhibit similarities, and Anna's subsequent misgivings over the studio's apparent knowledge of her whereabouts reveal a hint of the Victorian in her as well as the vestiges of a Victorian double-standard in our times. As Harlan Kennedy has observed:
Anna is not an immaculately-conceived feminist striding stridently into the Eighties but a woman whose sexual and spiritual evolution has been seen and presaged by us, like striations in a rock, in the story of her “ancestor.”... *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* is about the way the Past and its accretions are impacted in the Present, and how modern freedoms rise on the strata of bygone tyrannies.\footnotemark

Anna’s concern for the mask of appearance reverberates in her profession as an actress; the telephone is summoning her to the set. When Pinter resumes the Victorian story, we apparently witness Anna’s work on this day. This connection is another of his devices for predicting developments in the Victorian action; through the “actors’” anticipations of upcoming shooting calls, location changes, and script details, we receive advance information about future events in the story. Thus, Anna’s departure for work signals that a scene with Sarah, and without Charles, will follow.

In this scene with Sarah that does indeed ensue, Pinter compacts her past and circumstances into their briefest cinematic essence. This episode, in which Sarah sits silently sketching as two laborers move past her on the stairs, carrying a coffin, is Pinter’s invention; it lacks any counterpoint in the novel (except, perhaps, as a reference to her final situation as Rosetti’s apprentice). This image, however, works in several respects to materialize the periphrastic revelations of her background by Fowles’s narrative. Again, Pinter requires definitive starting points for his action, while Fowles’s medium permits him to introduce material in more roundabout fashion. Pinter’s contribution of this episode and of Sarah’s preoccupation with drawing capture the spirit of the novel’s implications; it picturizes her solitude, aloofness, and impenetrability. Increasingly, Sarah’s drawings will serve to amplify her interior concerns, particularly when she sketches the various masks of her face, looking into a mirror. Here, the juxtaposition of creativity and death signifies Sarah’s ascent to replace the old. Her persistence in sketching this drawing of an old woman on her deathbed, even after the Vicar appears and addresses her, emphasizes these qualities of isolation. The Vicar’s dialogue clarifies further aspects of her situation.

> You realize that you cannot stay here any longer? I happen to know that Miss Duff has made no provision for you in her will. The place is to be sold.  

*Pause.*

> How much money do you possess?  

*Pause.*

> When did you last eat? [P. 10]  

Sarah’s destitution and exclusion are apparent from the Vicar’s words. Fowles’s detailed explanations of her background as a transient
and an outcast become unnecessary in Pinter's account of the story. Cinematic codification necessitates immediate statement of some crisis that incites the action of forthcoming developments. Just as Charles commits himself to an improbable marriage with Ernestina, so Sarah enters an intolerable employment during the scenes that introduce her. When the Vicar offers to arrange a position for her in the home of Mrs. Poulteney, Sarah gratefully submits, after ascertaining that the house overlooks the sea. The novel places Sarah with Mrs. Poulteney one year before the events involving Charles and Ernestina. Pinter enlists Sarah in the Poulteney household at this point in the screenplay in order to exploit the episode as a direct cause for her despair and as dramatic communication of her circumstances in life. The ambiguity inherent in Pinter's temporal plot, however, prohibits certainty over the precise sequence of events, and the incident under discussion might be construed as a flashback consistent with the chronology of the novel, although such speculation seems moot. The sequence in which we see events and in which they effect us is not only more arguable, but more significant. In this case Pinter's adaptation serves as a compression of the story and its tensions.

Immediately following the scene between Sarah and the Vicar, Pinter elucidates the interview between Charles and Ernestina's father, Mr. Freeman. Although this confrontation occurs much later in the structure of the novel, its chronological placement precedes Fowles's initiation of the story. Beyond altering the structural location of this episode, Pinter changes the location of its setting and enlarges the scope of its subject; his revision and abbreviation of Charles's financial situation and Mr. Freeman's mercantile alternative are among Pinter's most radical departures from the novel.

Fowles discloses both this interview and the betrothal scene as moments from the past that are summoned by a digression concerning the ascent of the merchant class in Victorian society: a digression that follows his interjection of Mary's great-great-granddaughter's movie stardom. Economic themes assume much greater prominence in the novel than in the screenplay, since Fowles dwells at length on the Marxist implications of class oppression and capitalist consolidation, but Pinter abridges these motifs due probably as much to disinterest as to a need for editing. A victim of the declining aristocracy, Charles deplores Mr. Freeman's bourgeois mercantilism, and his disdain for the Freeman conglomerate is more apparent in Fowles's work, where Freeman's contempt for Charles's belief in Darwinian principles is ironically juxtaposed with Freeman's avid practice of social Darwinism, than in Pinter's adaptation. Fowles's numerous invocations of Marx and Darwin gain further significance as the narrative progresses, when the Marxist
view of history as a product of individual choice competes with the Darwinian view of history as a matter of random evolution. Pinter, however, reduces the scope of this idea, beginning with these alterations in Mr. Freeman; the screenplay retains Freeman's emblematic value, despite its elimination of his more intricate function in the plot and theme, by depicting him against a pictorially eloquent background of commercial activity and by interpolating dialogue from elsewhere in the novel.

Occasionally, Pinter deviates from the novel in order to capture details of character or period through the devices of montage and image. These deviations occur generally where Pinter's more urgent need for economy and unity otherwise forces him to forsake such details, despite their significance in the novel. The sequence of this interview provides an example of such revision. Although Freeman owns a department store in the original version of the story, Pinter portrays him as a magnate in the tea importation business. This change reputedly derived from the exigencies of location shooting, but it operates more vividly than a department store to define Freeman as a symbol of bourgeois mercantilism and labor exploitation. The successive milieux of the wharf, warehouse, and office, against which the interview transpires, materialize suggestions of these economic factors, otherwise lost from the novel. Overpowering machinery and swarms of laborers unloading "Freeman's Teas" are visible even from the prestigious vantage of Freeman's office. Both Fowles and Pinter indicate that Freeman approves the engagement due chiefly to his interest in Charles's inheritance and to his eagerness to employ Charles in the firm. Pinter, however, only hints at Charles's discomfort with Freeman's expectations, and the screenplay omits the elaborate process by which Charles loses his inheritance, rendering him at once less appealing to and more revulsed by Mr. Freeman's designs. These omissions by the screenplay focus the nature of Charles's options on the alternatives represented by Ernestina and Sarah.

As if to clarify these two alternatives, Pinter delineates the romantic triangle in the succeeding scene. This episode depicts the events on the Cobb that form Fowles's entry into the story. Pinter's restructuring of the action in this respect implies two ambiguous possibilities; if this scene reverts to continuous time with the first set-up, then the intervening scenes assume a flashback character, or, if this scene follows chronologically from the linear sequence of preceding episodes, then it establishes the recidivistic nature of Sarah's visits to the Cobb. Neither of these possibilities is verifiable, and both are appropriate.

The screenplay closely parallels the novel in its development of this
episode, beginning with Charles’s account for Ernestina of his meeting with her father. Since Charles describes portions of the interview that occurred “off camera,” we learn more about the interview as well as more about the characters and their relationships. Here, Charles reveals a glimmer of his contempt for the Freeman business, and Ernestina appears to share his disdain.

ERNESTINA. Oh dear, don’t tell me. Did he talk of his famous ‘empire’?
CHARLES. He did.
ERNESTINA. And did he propose that you might one day join him in the ruling of it?
CHARLES. He was most respectful of what he called my position as a ‘scientist and a gentleman.’ In fact he asked me about my . . . my work. But as I didn’t think fossils were his line exactly, I gave him a brief discourse on the Theory of Evolution instead.
ERNESTINA. How wicked of you!
CHARLES. Yes. He didn’t seem to think very much of it, I must admit. In fact he ventured the opinion that Mr. Darwin should be exhibited in a cage in the zoological gardens. In the monkeyhouse. [P. 12]

This banter, aside from articulating the thematic subject of Darwin and implicating the irony of capitalist Freeman’s opinion, establishes the urbane superficiality of the couple’s relationship.

Significantly, a gust of wind interrupts the exchange, causing Charles to recommend retreat and to notice the solitary, imperiled figure of Sarah, at the end of the Cobb. At this point in the novel, Charles questions Ernestina at length concerning the outcast woman, but Pinter reserves most of this inquiry for a later scene. Before approaching Sarah, Pinter’s Charles manages to elicit from Ernestina only three commonplace designations of Sarah: two nicknames, “poor Tragedy” and “the French Lieutenant’s Woman,” and one diagnosis, madness. All three will prove false. Despite Ernestina’s discouragement Charles goes heroically to Sarah, who rewards his overture with a sharp stare that petrifies and haunts him. The prescribed montage for this moment exemplifies the pattern of opening up human contexts into geologic ones:

   CHARLES and SARAH staring at each other. [P. 13]

In this manner the meeting between Charles and Sarah assumes a broader significance and a linkage with the course of the world.

By postponing Charles’s efforts to examine Ernestina about Sarah until after his encounter with Sarah on the Cobb, Pinter suggests, with-
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out the narrative devices of a novelist, that Sarah’s stare has intrigued Charles. Furthermore, Pinter’s relocation of the setting facilitates other ideas difficult to retrieve from the written text. The questioning sequence in the screenplay occurs in Ernestina’s sitting room, and it alternates with a simultaneous scene between Sam and Mary in the kitchen. Pinter derives the situation and the dialogue closely from the novel, rearranging only the particular collaboration of components. As if to echo Charles’s ominous defection from proper society in the previous episode, this sequence initiates with an act of secret insubordination by the servants; the juxtaposition suggests imminent collapse of the formal social structure, amplifying the significance of Charles’s attraction to Sarah. While Sam’s attentions keep Mary from delivery of her mistress’s tea, Ernestina chafes at the bell pull, and Charles plies her with his questions. In this manner Ernestina’s despotic impatience over her tardy maid sharpens the contrast between her spoiled, petty character and that of the enigmatic Sarah, whose secret Charles seeks. Ernestina provides Charles only with insipid gossip about the woman, phrasing her answers to affect her indifference about the subject, her coyness regarding things sexual, and her frustration over Mary’s delinquency. The banality of her responses presumably facilitates Charles’s calculation of insouciance on his own part; his apparent nonchalance, in the context of his obvious curiosity, seems rather a contrivance to fool Ernestina. By displaying the pettiness of Ernestina’s immediate objective against the mystery of Sarah’s protracted obsession, however, the situation in this scene yields its argument.

Pinter’s transposition of the setting for this dialogue works to fix Charles’s growing disenchantment with Ernestina and her lifestyle. The artificial interior of her sitting room reflects and intensifies her trivial, proper nature, and it contrasts these qualities with the environment in which Charles knows Sarah. These pictorial implications become crucial in the screenplay, since Charles’s internal monologues, by which he states in the novel his aversions to the prospects of Ernestina and his attractions to the prospects of Sarah, cannot be gracefully recreated on film. Instead, Pinter burdens image and sequence with this revelatory function.

Sarah’s circumstances, a matter of distastefulness and blushing for Ernestina, become the subject of Pinter’s succeeding sequence. Although he abbreviates the dialogue and adjusts it to convey something of the Vicar’s derisive estimation of Mrs. Poulteney (an attitude otherwise omitted from the screenplay), Pinter faithfully reproduces from the novel the interview of Sarah by Mrs. Poulteney. Fowles spends considerable effort on Mrs. Poulteney’s villainy, detailing her abuse of her
servants and her merciless, hypocritical practice of Christianity; one of
the novel’s various endings culminates in Mrs. Poulteney’s lurid, fan­
tastical descent into hell. Pinter, however, relies on her interrogation of
Sarah to establish Mrs. Poulteney’s acrimonious zeal.

*MRS. POULTENEY. The post of companion requires a person of irreproachable
moral character. I have my servants to consider.

The VICAR coughs.

MRS. POULTENEY looks at him and then turns back to regard SARAH in
silence.

You speak French, I believe?

SARAH. I do, ma’m.

MRS. POULTENEY. I do not like the French.

The VICAR coughs again.

Perhaps you might leave us now, Mr. Forsythe? [P. 16]

The Vicar’s efforts to discourage Mrs. Poulteney’s line of questioning
derive from the common wisdom that a French lieutenant has stained
Sarah’s character and then abandoned her to await wretchedly his im­
probable return; the conspiratorial coughs suggest that Mrs. Poulteney
is aware of these circumstances, as she is in the novel, from a prelimi­
nary conference with the Vicar. When Sarah submits to all of Mrs.
Poulteney’s stipulations and demonstrates her ability to read with
‘agreeable expression’ from the Bible, Mrs. Poulteney takes her in.

In the screenplay Pinter splices a present day clip into the middle of
Sarah’s Bible reading.


ANNA is standing in her corset, her back to the camera. Her dresser
is unlacing her corset. It comes off. ANNA rubs her waist. She sighs with
relief.

ANNA. Christ! [P. 18]

This interlude, which was excluded from the film, serves not only as an
amusing contrast between Sarah and Anna, but also as an identification
of their plights. Since a second present time sequence follows Sarah’s
reading, the rapid oscillation between periods was presumably judged
confusing, and the corset scene as well as the subsequent reading were
deleted. Instead, the film moves directly from Sarah’s initiation of read­
ing to a scene between Mike and Anna in Mike’s hotel room.

This hotel room episode serves multiple purposes; it reveals the me­
chanics of acting craft, it predicts events in the film, and it juxtaposes
then with now. As Mike reads a newspaper (in the film he solves a
crossword puzzle, aptly suggesting modern divestment of language),
Anna, wearing glasses, researches her role. When she discovers the
popularity of brothels during the Victorian period, she connects this information with the meaning of one of her upcoming lines of dialogue: "‘If I went to London I know what I should become. I should become what some already call me in Lyme’" (p. 19). Mike responds to her recitation of statistics by picking up a calculator, and the scene ends with his remark: "Allow about a third off for boys and old men... That means that outside marriage—a Victorian gentleman had about two point four fucks a week" (p. 19). As a helicopter passes overhead, the scene becomes a veritable inventory of technological devaluation of experience, recalling the Madwoman of Chaillot’s lament: "They destroy space with telephones and time with airplanes.” Two complementary perspectives emerge from the inelegance of this episode; we perceive the coarseness and vapidity beneath the masks of Charles and Sarah, and we perceive the refinement and profundity beneath the masks of Mike and Anna, who rise so capably to their roles. Again, the distinction and the identification are united.

In both novel and screenplay, various forms of mask denote the relationship between Sarah and Charles. Pinter’s delineation of Mike and Anna, whose performances are always dimly visible through the dialogue of Sarah and Charles, accounts for only one instance of such contrivance. From Fowles’s recurrent treatises on the self-conscious posturing of his characters, their obsessions with mirrors, manners, literature, and effect, Pinter engineers cinematic images that are symptomatic of artifice.

The screenplay, for example, usually displays Sarah carefully posed in some precarious state. When Charles encounters her a second time, she is perched on an almost inaccessible and perilous ledge of the Undercliff: “On the broad sloping ledge of grass SARAH is sitting. The ledge is five feet below the plateau. Below it is a mass of brambles—beyond it the cliff falling to the sea” (p. 21). As Charles, clad in his fossil-hunting regalia, observes her from the plateau, her position acquires a suspicion of contrivance, or self-conscious manipulation. Pinter, in fact, amplifies this suspicion through an abrupt shift into present time: “Close up. Anna. Caravan. Present. She takes off her wig, puts it on a table. She shakes her hair loose. She stares at her face in the mirror” (p. 22). Although this scene was eliminated from the film, again probably for the sake of fluidity, it contributes in the script to an impression of Sarah as a conceit. Thus, Pinter encodes in cinematic language Fowles’s various notations that his characters habitually contrive their behavior, that they enact roles.

Mike and Anna, Pinter’s principal representatives of this process, strive incessantly to conform their own relationship to the one in the
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fiction. Since their personal situations resemble those of their characters, their efforts are rich with irony. They often confound objective and subjective realities, mixing the qualities and actions of their characters with the qualities and actions of their selves. In a sequence that was deleted from the film, Mike and Anna mock their dialogue, using it to breach a gap between them that is otherwise unbreachable, due to the circumstances and conventions of their situation. This episode further confuses their identities, while belittling both the romantic past, as “acting,” and the cynical present, as inarticulate. A later sequence between Mike and Anna, which does occur in the film, contains similar innuendos; an awkward rehearsal transforms abruptly into its finished product. As Mike bends, script in hand, to help Anna up from the floor of their rehearsal quarters, Pinter sharply converts their ambiguous relationship into the ambiguous, but scripted, relationship between Charles and Sarah. Beyond the shocking juxtaposition of the two periods, this piece of montage shoots the artifice of acting through all dimensions of the moment.

The relationship between Mike and Anna operates both as a replica of and a foil for the story of Charles and Sarah. Although we learn that Mike is married to another woman and that Anna is committed to another lover (a Frenchman in the film), Pinter reveals these parallels at a point where they oppose the action of the fiction. Thus, as Charles and Sarah converge, Mike and Anna begin to draw apart, due to Pinter’s introduction of their external commitments. Other circumstances are similarly reversed; if Mike’s marriage to Sonia parallels Charles’s engagement to Ernestina, Anna’s reluctance to give up David provides a closer replication of Charles’s dilemma. If Anna shares certain qualities of mystery with Sarah, her opposite qualities of security distinguish her from her character. In the present day sequences, Mike is anxious, but Anna is snug; in the “script” their configurations are reversed. Both storylines, however, depict the woman’s freedom as relatively greater than that of the man, and as Peter J. Conradi notes, “One scene on the set showing Anna in jeans while Mike is in Victorian costume would seem (especially as the opposite combination never occurs) to serve to underline the point.” Eventually, Pinter will capitalize on these parallels and deviations to materialize the alternative conclusions of Fowles’s novel.

Like that of Anna, Sarah’s inscrutability is partly the byproduct of concealed ulterior motives. Her frustrations of Charles’s overtures are subsequently revealed as a strategy for attracting his interest. Since Fowles’s medium allows him unique opportunities for disclosing Sarah’s machinations, Pinter must insinuate some aggressive pattern in
her behavior to account for these hidden designs. He accomplishes this task by making Sarah the author of several messages, some of which occur in the novel, imploring Charles to assist her. These opaque communications exhibit a provocative, unyielding quality that is clearly Pinterian. During tea with Ernestina, Aunt Tranter, and Mrs. Poulteney, Sarah furtively slips Charles the first of her letters: "I pray you to meet me at nine tonight. St. Michael's Churchyard" (p. 36).

In the novel this meeting takes place on the Undercliff, without prearrangement. Pinter, however, locates it "in the shadow of a large tombstone" (p. 37), where they risk emphatic prospects of discovery. By including in this scene the line from Anna's earlier preparation, "If I went to London I know what I should become. I should become what some already call me in Lyme," Pinter suggests the artifice behind Sarah's solicitation of Charles's confidence. Thus, Pinter intimates that even Sarah's arrangement of her false confession may amount to a ploy: an effect contrived to snare Charles. To the accompaniment of the church organ, she speaks of her misery and helplessness, pleading for Charles's assistance.

I want to tell you of what happened to me eighteen months ago.

The organ suddenly stops.

I beg you. You are my only hope. I shall be on the Undercliff tomorrow afternoon and the next afternoon. I shall wait for you. [Pp. 38-39]

Charles does not offer to channel aid to her through the intermediary of Mrs. Tranter, as he does here and repeatedly in the novel. Pinter's Charles gives no indication of his intentions at the conclusion of the scene. By revising the impetus, location, and development of this episode, however, Pinter creates a cinematic momentum toward upcoming consequences.

Both Pinter and Fowles postpone the consequences of this rendezvous to introduce Dr. Grogan, whose advice Charles seeks during the pretext of a social visit. Although Pinter simplifies the circumstances of the visit and condenses the role of the doctor, he retains the clumsy change of subject by which Charles reveals his purpose. As the two become acquainted, exchanging pleasantries over Grogan's telescope, the conversation turns to paleontology, a science that Grogan dismisses.

GROGAN. When we know more of the living it will be time to pursue the dead. They sit back with their brandy and cheroots.

CHARLES. Yes. I was introduced the other day to a specimen of the local flora that rather inclines me to agree with you. A very strange case, as far as I understand it. Her name is Woodruff. [P. 40]
Dissatisfied with Ernestina’s impatient, naive explanations and bewildered by his own contact with Sarah, Charles enlists the opinion of the local professional. The circumstances in the screenplay are nearly as conspicuous as the explications in the novel; Charles intends this consultation both to purify his involvement with Sarah and to conceal his interest from Ernestina and her ilk.

Pinter’s condensation of Grogan renders the doctor a more immediately sympathetic figure than the mercurial character in the Fowles, but this new affability serves chiefly to accentuate Grogan’s inability to provide a convincing diagnosis of Sarah’s condition. Dismissing Charles’s suggestion that Sarah’s mood may be the consequence of the French lieutenant’s betrayal, Grogan attributes her predicament to Hartmann’s “third class” of melancholia: “... obscure melancholia. By which he really means, poor man, that he doesn’t know what the devil it is that caused it” (p. 40). Grogan, however, does attempt to explain Sarah’s behavior according to familiar patterns of neurosis. Again, he invokes the wisdom of Hartmann: “It was as if her torture had become her delight” (p. 41). Although Pinter deletes, here and later, Grogan’s more extreme interpretations of Sarah’s behavior as maliciously manipulative, Charles finds it impossible to accept even what remains of these pat explanations. He ignores Grogan’s warning that Sarah “does not want to be cured,” and determines to hear her confession, hoping that such a confidence will heal her.

Neither Fowles nor Pinter exposes the contrived nature of Sarah’s confession until later in the story. Fowles’s Sarah, however, does accompany her speech with an activity that becomes retrospectively significant; as she speaks, she fondles and then defoliates a milkwort, a blue flower that Fowles describes as resembling “microscopic cherubs’ genitals” (p. 138). Pinter’s screenplay includes no such direction, but, in the film, Sarah achieves a comparable effect by seductively undoing her hair as she talks. Also absent from the screenplay are Sarah’s lengthy denunciations of Charles’s privileges of sex and class, and what Pinter does retain of her attacks on Charles was omitted from the film. By editing this scene to reduce the quantity of vindictive recriminations and background details, Pinter focuses, at least in retrospect, Sarah’s manipulative crafting of her story. Typically, Pinter signifies her process of fabrication by indicating pauses in her speech. These pauses occur not only for the purpose of invention, but also for the effect of impact. She describes her fictitious pursuit of the French lieutenant in Weymouth.
SARAH. But he had changed. He was full of smiles and caresses but I knew at once that he was insincere. I saw that I had been an amusement for him, nothing more. He was a liar. I saw all this within five minutes of our meeting.

Pause.

Yet I stayed. I ate the supper that was served. I drank the wine he pressed on me. It did not intoxicate me. I think it made me see more clearly. Is that possible?

CHARLES. No doubt.

Pause.

SARAH. Soon he no longer bothered to hide the real nature of his intentions towards me. Nor could I pretend surprise. My innocence was false from the moment I chose to stay. I could tell you that he overpowered me, that he drugged me. But it is not so.

She looks at him directly.

I gave myself to him.

Silence. [Pp. 44-45]

Sarah's eloquence and control of her audience in this speech become even more remarkable after her falseness is exposed. Retrospectively, the artificial confession serves as alarming evidence that the outward manifestations of one truth, here her machinations, may be mistaken for the signs of another. As Charles views her performance of the speech, it signifies an agonized confession; later, it will add up differently. Hindsight reveals that Sarah actually constructs this memory from her impressions of the present situation, and that she is suggesting things to Charles about themselves.

When Charles manages to suggest only that Sarah flee Lyme to escape her stigma, and when, alarmed by her power of attraction over him, he demands that they never meet alone again, Sarah takes desperate action. Knowing that Mrs. Poulteney will dismiss her if the zealot learns of her excursion to the Undercliff, Sarah deliberately flaunts her return before the eyes of Mrs. Poulteney's henchwoman, Mrs. Fairley, who observes her behavior from the dairy. In the novel Sarah's decision to expose herself is explicit, but the screenplay only implies her deliberate flagrancy: "The dairy field. Mrs. Fairley's P.O.V. SARAH walking openly towards Lyme" (p. 46). Sarah's choice of this open path in the film, however, is conspicuous. In all cases the crisis of Sarah's consequent banishment acquires further suspicion of contrivance when Charles receives her threatening letter.

At this point in the novel, Sarah sends Charles two messages, the first of which seems to threaten suicide and the second of which provides directions to her refuge, in French. Pinter combines the sense of these two communications into one note: "The secret is out. Am at the barn on the Undercliff. Only you stand between me and oblivion" (p. 47).
Despite the deceptive, threatening tone of this letter, Sarah's ulterior design is not yet apparent, either to Charles or to the audience. Rather, her plight remains compassionate and importunate, and her current situation uncertain, since neither Fowles nor Pinter provides any clue beyond the letter to indicate Sarah's new predicament.

Again, and for the same reasons, Charles seeks Grogan's advice. Pinter invents the preliminary scene, in which Charles tracks Grogan to the asylum and arranges to consult with him later at home. The rationale for the asylum episode seems essentially theatrical, but the milieu does materialize articulated fears that plague Charles at this point in the novel. As wretched female patients whimper and scream for help, Pinter's Charles confronts the physical manifestation of Sarah's alternative future, which Fowles's Charles so dreads in his imagination. The dialogue between Charles and Grogan at the asylum and during the subsequent scene in Grogan's study, however, derives closely from the novel, which sets both segments of the conversation in Grogan's den. As before, Pinter softens Grogan's stance, deleting the doctor's more vehement allegations against Sarah and omitting the case studies of deranged, malicious women that Fowles has Grogan lend Charles. Instead, Pinter recreates Grogan's more playful, sympathetic activities in this chapter.

GROGAN goes to a book shelf and takes down a copy of 'Origin of Species.' He puts his hand on it, as on a bible.

GROGAN. Nothing that has been said in this room tonight or that remains to be said shall go beyond these walls. Well, now, you ask for my advice. He paces up and down the room.

I am a young woman of superior intelligence and some education. I am not in full command of my emotions. What is worse, I have fallen in love with being a victim of fate. Enter a young god. Intelligent. Goodlooking. Kind. I have but one weapon. The pity I inspire in him. So what do I do? I seize my chance. One day, when I am walking where I have been forbidden to walk, I show myself to someone I know will report my crime to the one person who will not condone it. I disappear, under the strong presumption that it is in order to throw myself off the nearest clifftop. And then—in extremis, I cry to my savior for help. [Pp. 50-51]

Neither Charles nor the audience can accept this interpretation of Sarah's behavior; at this juncture in the action, the diagnosis seems preposterous, however conceivable it may be as an explanation of her actions. Again, only in retrospect do we grasp that Grogan's perception of Sarah here is completely accurate, and the degree of his accuracy occurs only by virtue of Pinter's omissions. Thus, by tempering Grogan's pronouncements upon Sarah, Pinter intensifies the irony of Charles's inability to credit them. Charles, in fact, mobilizes against
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Grogan and in defense of Sarah with much greater force in the screenplay than in the novel, despite Pinter’s reduction of Grogan’s incitement. Fowles strongly suggests Charles’s readiness to relinquish Sarah to Grogan, but Pinter employs this scene primarily to focus Charles’s growing affection for and commitment to her. In this respect the asylum episode functions to clarify the motives of Charles and Grogan and to lessen the need for explicit reference to this subtext. Typically, Pinter manages to establish the reality and abhorrence of this prospect without violating the articulate capabilities of his characters. Although Charles insists on his intention to wed Ernestina and reluctantly agrees to bear the expense of institutionalizing Sarah, Pinter clearly insinuates, from the events in the asylum and from Charles’s adamant defense of Sarah, that this course will change.

The complicated process by which Charles decides, in the novel, to imitate Sarah’s freedom by endangering his social position to rescue her is suggested by the film, but not by Pinter’s screenplay. In the film, as Charles lies on his bed in a pose that conspicuously duplicates one of Sarah’s earlier configurations, he visualizes the challenge in her stare during the Cobb encounter. Then he rises to go to her: an action that both Fowles and the film connect explicitly with this challenge. Pinter, however, weakens this connection, depicting Charles’s decision as a purposeful gazing out the window.

Fowles’s ruminations during Charles’s journey to Sarah also contain several perceptions that Pinter reduces to implicit values in the screenplay. This chapter in Fowles’s version initiates with a prefatory quotation from Marx, attacking the conscious deceits and illusions of the ruling class. The narrative links these traits with Mrs. Poulteney and, indirectly, with Sarah, revealing the impermanence of their postures and suggesting that external appearance amounts to a mask assumed temporarily to conceal the inner nature of the thing. In the preceding chapter, the beginning of Charles’s trek through the Undercliff, Fowles dwells upon the omnipresence of entropy in nature and upon the hiatus between human and natural affairs. Consequently, these deliberations on the mutability of individuals tend to reflect the fundamental condition of the world: the characters, like the universe, are forever changing, breaking down, inscrutable. To these observations Fowles adds that the Victorian view of the world depended upon “positive all-explaining theories” (p. 197), and that this was not the era for dialectics, paradox, or existentialism. In this manner Fowles prepares the shock of the sudden freedom that engulfs Charles and Sarah in the barn.

Pinter invites some of these insights through his prescriptions for “dense birdsong,” lush foliage, and flooding sunlight, but the narrative arguments are necessarily absent from the screenplay, except as they
inform its intrinsic premises. The encounter between Charles and Sarah in the barn involves only one significant difference from its description in the novel: Pinter omits Sarah's confession of her contrived discovery on the path. Otherwise, the screenplay faithfully depicts Charles's impetuous surrendering to Sarah and his absurd explanation of his circumstances to Sam and Mary, who have witnessed the passionate embrace. His amorous mood checked by the appearance of the servants and by the formality of his account to them, Charles returns stiffly to Sarah and arranges her escape to Exeter.

Through the present time scene that follows the barn episode in the screenplay, Pinter introduces further parallels and contrasts between his Victorian lovers and his "actor" lovers; in both stories the female is leaving and the male is remaining behind, but, although Charles orders Sarah away, Anna abandons Mike. Pinter has already suggested Mike's frustration over Anna's deviations from Sarah; the scene in which Charles receives Sarah's desperate letter was identically duplicated by a preceding scene in which Mike lies alone in his hotel room. Hindsight of this duplicate shot implies that Mike is lamenting his inability to rescue Anna from similar straits.

Anna's departure for London, which she announces during lunch at a mobile canteen on the set, provides a hermeneutic lead in the story line of the script. Her inadvertent signal that Sarah does indeed leave Lyme diminishes some suspense and eliminates certain prospects from the upcoming story, though it arouses other anxieties and possibilities. Mike's declaration of his intention to see her in London also serves to adumbrate future developments in the Victorian fiction. This shift in the locus of suspense, from what will happen to how it will happen, imitates the circuitous route of Fowles's narrative: just as the shock of "Mary" at lunch with "Ernestina" materializes Fowles's arguments concerning class and mask.

The succeeding scenes depict Charles's decision and arrangements to leave for London. His discomforting encounters with Sam, Mary, and Ernestina disclose the vulnerability of his enforced deceit. Because of his indiscretion, Charles has degraded himself before the servants, and his efforts to exert his artificial superiority over them appear foolish and strained, tending mainly to reduce him to their level. Sam questions his authority, Mary questions his bribe, and Ernestina questions his reasons for going to London. The artificiality of his language with Ernestina rings so falsely that even she discerns his pretension.

CHARLES. Ernestina, I know our private affections are the paramount consideration, but there is also a legal and contractual side to matrimony which is—

ERNESTINA. Fiddlesticks! [P. 59]
Charles manages, nevertheless, to win three days leave from Ernestina, and he flees Lyme, where his mask is sagging in the eyes of all, for London, where his image is intact among his peers.

The lawyer, Montague, and Charles's cronies, Sir Tom and Nat, are minor characters in the novel, but Pinter retains them for their cinematic value as foils for Charles. Montague's name already occurred twice in the screenplay; Charles has offered it to Sarah as an intermediary for his money, and he has offered it to Ernestina as an excuse for his visit to London. By substantially enlarging Montague's role, Pinter has altered his source to focus Charles's opponents, in a manner similar to his reworking of Charley in Accident. Montague enjoys a social superiority that Charles both envies and, uneasily, rejects. Fowles suggests only that Montague was an acquaintance of Charles at school; but Pinter organizes the vague, rambling doubts and threats of the novel into the figure of this secure, successful lawyer, who represents them in an image: a living index of Charles's eventual sacrifice.

The subconscious contest between them is manifest initially in a savage game of old English tennis, which introduces their relationship. This game, characteristic of Pinter and original in his version of the story, serves as a thickly masked primitive combat, which discloses not only Charles's relationship with Montague, but also Charles's internal state of mind. Pinter describes their rally as "violent, intense" (p. 60), and he assigns the victory to Charles. This triumph discharges some of Charles's feelings of frustration and inferiority, and it also provides him with a necessary temporary advantage over Montague; Charles must compromise himself by enlisting Montague's aid in channeling money to Sarah. Montague agrees tersely to forward the allotments and to serve as a barrier between Charles and the whole business, but the exchange marks a further deterioration in Charles's posture.

Subsequent episodes of Sam's mounting insurrection and of Charles's debauchery with Sir Tom and Nat continue this process of decay. Pinter makes several alterations in Charles's encounter of Sir Tom and Nat at his club. The novel includes a visit to Ma Terpsichore's brothel in the trio's itinerary, detailing Charles's flight from this house into the rooms of a prostitute who resembles Sarah. In order to preserve Charles's purity for his affair with Sarah and to focus other aspects of the trio's rendezvous, Pinter breaks this sequence in half, reserving the prostitute for much later in the action. The screenplay concentrates on the grotesque qualities of the club scene, emphasizing the trio's drunken degradation in the presence of the dignified, impenetrable staff of servants. As Charles and his atavistic chums toast deceased hunting hounds, their progressive incoherence and regressive behavior reveal the Darwinian
ape behind their aristocratic postures. This incident serves also to amplify Charles’s internal crisis and to engage him in competition with his peers; here the amplification and the contest consist of excessive drinking, and Charles loses the bout. Pinter describes their aborted exit for the brothel as follows:

CHARLES stands and collapses. They catch him and hold him up between them.

The group staggers across the room and crashes into a table, knocking it over. They ricochet into another table. With cries from SIR TOM and NAT of ‘Whoops!’ ‘Steady there!’ and finally ‘Charge!’ the group crashes into table after table along the length of the dining room.

Three expressionless waiters watch them.
They all collapse in a heap on the floor.
CHARLES’ eyes closed.

SIR TOM. I don’t think our dear Charley is going anywhere tonight, old boy, do you? [P. 64]

Charles’s greater degree of incapacitation becomes still more pronounced in the film, where his companions remain upright, as he performs a solo execution of Pinter’s directions.

Sam’s attempt to blackmail the hungover Charles will conclude this round of humiliations. By steaming open an envelope addressed to Charles, which arrives the following morning, Sam deduces Charles’s continued involvement with Sarah and decides to pursue his own interests. He delivers the letter, which states simply, “‘Endicott’s Family Hotel, Exeter,’” to Charles and, as Charles struggles to formulate a negative reply to Sarah’s implied invitation, Sam insinuates his proposition. Announcing his intention to open a haberdashery, Sam solicits money from Charles to back the venture, plainly relying on his knowledge of Charles’s affairs for leverage in this matter. Charles’s reaction to this tactic signifies not only his refusal to be blackmailed by his servant, but also his rejection of the mercantile trap of marriage to Ernestina. Pinter connects the dual ramifications of Charles’s response by indicating that Charles accompanies his denouncement of Sam’s proposal by ripping apart the letter he was preparing for Sarah. Finally, Charles concludes the confrontation by announcing his intention to leave immediately for Lyme.

Pinter’s deviations from the novel become more conspicuous during the London episodes and during those that follow. His embellishment of Montague, his transplantation of the prostitute, and his abridgement of Grogan comprise some of the screenplay’s alterations in the latter portion of the story. More significantly, Pinter has rearranged and revised Fowles’s material to stress the inevitability of Charles’s stopover in
Exeter during the journey to Lyme. For Fowles, Charles's decision to visit Sarah occurs almost as an impulse, and Fowles obscures the choice through complicated circumstances and deceptive narrative. In the novel Charles's experiences in London are not so clearly gauged to provoke his rejection of the privileged lifestyle; only through Fowles's commentary do we learn of Charles's misgivings about his impending marriage and of his growing sensation "that the pursuit of money was an insufficient purpose in life" (p. 233). Fowles further confounds Charles's situation by misleading the reader through a series of false developments in the story; he devotes two chapters to a description of Charles's direct return to Lyme and reconciliation with Ernestina, before exposing these actions as a fantasy.

I said earlier that we are all poets, though not many of us write poetry; and so we are 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.

Charles was no exception; and the last few pages you have read are not what happened, but what he spent the hours between London and Exeter imagining might happen. [P. 266]

This peculiar retraction not only interrupts the dynamic of Charles's decision, but also suggests the desire to conform life to fiction that Pinter so effectively captures in the screenplay. The complexity of Fowles's narrative through this section of the book, however, eludes cinematic expression, and Pinter converts the sense of these digressions into images, characters, and actions, restructuring these components to exploit the power of his medium. Thus, the screenplay intensifies the dynamics of Charles's dilemma, where the novel indulges in obfuscating this process. Pinter even inserts a present time scene (cut from the film), which follows Charles's announcement of his departure for Lyme, and which ordains the eventuality of his disembarkment at Lyme. Again mingling the reality of his character with the reality of his own experience, Mike teases Anna: "You know what's going to happen in Exeter? I'm going to have you in Exeter" (p. 67). In this manner Charles's decision to remain overnight in Exeter appears not only premeditated, but inexorable.

Two scenes detailing Sarah's activities in Exeter have already intervened at this juncture in the action; in the first Sarah arrives with her suitcases and in the second, she unpacks some purchases. Pinter modifies these activities by dividing them with the Montague episode, where Fowles portrays them intact, and by altering certain aspects of the
novel’s depiction. By deleting Sarah’s porter from the screenplay, Pinter acutely picturizes her determined independence, as she hauls her luggage up the hill toward Endicott’s Hotel; by deleting the bandage that Fowles includes among her purchases, however, Pinter diminishes the evidence of Sarah’s scheme to entrap Charles. Sarah’s procurement of the bandage in advance of her supposed ankle sprain clearly exposes her contrivance of the injury. Pinter, however, relies on a preponderance of other indications that the injury is probably a pretense, and omits the bandage for the sake of subtlety, if not uncertainty. Earlier in the screenplay and novel, Charles has virtually suggested the idea to Sarah, by commenting during one of their encounters on the Undercliff that a turned ankle would place her in grave jeopardy. Pinter stresses this episode in the woods by abruptly cutting to it from the rehearsal scene: simultaneously linking the idea of the injury to the art of deception. Both the novel and the screenplay provide additional evidence of Sarah’s strategy through her careful arrangement of her newly purchased nightgown and shawl; when Charles arrives she will replicate the image that she now creates with the apparel.

Sarah’s plan works perfectly in the versions of both media, although Pinter makes some alterations in its aftermath. When Charles discovers her elaborate helplessness, he instantly succumbs to her wiles; but, significantly, a true accident participates in Sarah’s contrived design, inciting the final momentum in Charles’s seduction. A cascade of coal from Sarah’s fire ignites her blanket, and Charles’s efforts to rescue her culminate in the passion that sends them to her bed. Through this fortuitous cooperation between chosen and unchosen events, Fowles and Pinter suggest that planning can accomplish only so much; accident is also a factor in experience. In the film this incident signifies not only a conspiracy of design and fate, but also a recurrent visual motif of caged fire, here conspicuously liberated from its constraints.

Pinter’s significant deviations from the novel occur subsequent to the seduction, where Charles’s postcoital regrets are less pronounced and his determination of Sarah’s virginity more discreet than in Fowles’s text. Although Fowles’s Sarah openly admits her entrapment of Charles and clearly rejects the prospect of a future relationship with him, Pinter softens these developments in a tender, affectionate scene that yields only ambiguity. The disclosure of Sarah’s virginity greatly complicates the hermeneutics of the story, both in the novel and in the screenplay: it instantaneously recasts as false our principal impressions of the past, and it misleads our expectations for the future by hinting a false promise of a conventional happy ending. The revelation of Sarah’s purity and the implication of Charles in her ruin strongly indicate a fruition of their relationship. Although Pinter diminishes Fowles’s forecast of doom in
the latter part of this scene, the screenplay does reaffirm Sarah’s ultimate inscrutability through her refusal to explain her fabrication of the French lieutenant affair: a fabrication that, revealed, intensifies the mystery of her solitude and misery at Lyme. Thus, despite all recognition of Sarah’s contrivances, she remains finally mystifying and unpredictable.

Again, Pinter depicts Sarah’s flight through the device of his present day interpolations. As Mike hands Anna a cheese and onion sandwich through the window of her waiting train, he begs her to remain overnight. Both Charles and Mike are trapped in the rigors of obligation: Charles must discharge his Victorian duty, and Mike must abide by the shooting schedule. Sarah and Anna, however, are apparently free: Sarah from mores, and Anna from the script. Although Anna’s freedom correlates with Sarah’s in certain respects, it differs in more significant and consequential ways. A Sartrean nausea afflicts Anna; her freedom is so great that it paralyzes her, and she cannot choose. Unlike Sarah, she cannot defy convention, because convention barely exists. Instead she follows the course of least resistance.

MIKE. Stay tonight.

ANNA. I can’t.

MIKE. Why not? You’re a free woman.

ANNA. Yes. I am.

MIKE. I’m going mad.

ANNA. No you’re not.

She leans through the window and kisses him.

MIKE (intensely). I want you so much.

ANNA (with mock gravity). But you’ve just had me. In Exeter. [P. 74]

Through this exchange Pinter forecasts Sarah’s disappearance while developing his representation of the poverty of modern experience: its absence of stakes, language, passion, rules, choice, and defiance. Beyond our detection of Anna’s false freedom, we note also her typical confusion of fictional and real events.

Anna’s actions in this scene keynote a pattern of duplicity that subsequently infests nearly all of Mike/Charles’s relationships; Ernestina, Sam, Grogan, and Sarah will now betray Charles in rapid succession. The most revealing of these confrontations occurs between Charles and Ernestina, when he attempts to terminate their engagement.

CHARLES. Ernestina, I have realised, in these last days, that too great a part of my regard for you has always been ignoble. I was far more tempted by your father’s fortune than I have cared to admit. Now I have seen that to be the truth—
ERNESTINA. Are you saying you have never loved me?
CHARLES. I am not worthy of you.

ERNESTINA. Charles . . . I know I am spoiled. I know I am not . . . unusual. But under your love and protection . . . I believed I should become better. I would do anything . . . you see . . . I would abandon anything . . . to make you happy . . .

She covers her face.
He stands still.
She suddenly looks at him.
ERNESTINA. You are lying. Something else has happened.

Pause.
CHARLES. Yes.
ERNESTINA. Who?
CHARLES. You do not know her.
ERNESTINA (dully). I don’t know her?
CHARLES. I have known her . . . many years. I thought the attachment was broken. I discovered in London . . . that it is not. [Pp. 75-76]

Charles’s initial tactic, the confession of his avarice, contains at least some degree of accuracy, and Pinter adopts this ploy from the novel to demonstrate that the apparent is always formed by partial truths which conceal other truths that, for various reasons, cannot be articulated. Generally, this scene reproduces the same episode in the novel, except that Pinter has tightened its sinews to accentuate the disguised machinations of the characters. Thus, he exposes Ernestina’s duplicity in her abrupt transition from tears of entreaty to accusations of deceit, and he denotes Charles’s humiliation through his confessions to circumstances farther and farther from the truth. The scene concludes as Ernestina, stripped of her role as fiancee, reveals a vitriolic stripe concealed by her former mask, and retaliates against Charles: “My father will drag your name—both your names, through the mire. You will be spurned and detested by all who know you. You will be hounded out of England, you will be—” (p. 76). Although Fowles continues this episode to assure that Charles arranges for Ernestina’s attendance by Mary and Dr. Grogan, Pinter terminates the scene at this point, noting only that Ernestina swoons, and not that she peeks at Charles, as she does in the novel, when he leaves her. Even her fainting, however, was eliminated from the film, where the action cuts abruptly to Pinter’s entirely original depiction of Sam’s openly hostile defection from Charles.

As Charles abandons convention, its blessings abandon him: the structures of artifice do not withstand weakening without total collapse, and the choice for freedom invites the disaster of chaos. A subsequent scene between Charles and Grogan, included in both the novel and the screenplay, but deleted from the film, echoes this sentiment. Here,
Grogan also deserts Charles, accusing him of deceit and lust, and alleging that these crimes will infect the remainder of Charles's life. Charles's rhapsodic invocations of his freedom fall flat, and his discovery, in the succeeding episode, that Sarah has fled compounds the contamination of his fragile optimism. To these developments Pinter adds several scenes in which Mike attempts to contact Anna, who has ensconced herself in a London hotel room with David. As Charles scours all of London for signs of Sarah and contends with the legal actions instituted by the Freemans, Anna gads about in a Mercedes, admires herself in costumes, and sips tea with David. Pinter also includes in this section of the screenplay Charles's ill-fated encounter with the prostitute and her infant, a trite, sentimental episode in the novel that Fowles ties to two romantic motifs: Charles's revulsion by whores, and the child he fathers, in one version of the ending, with Sarah. Since neither of these ideas occurs in the screenplay, this sequence was judiciously eliminated from the film.

Pinter's deviations from the novel proliferate throughout the denouement of the story. Where Fowles concerns himself with the good fortunes of Sam and Mary and with Charles's perambulations in Europe and America, Pinter focuses the mounting desperation in Mike and Anna's efforts to transform their destiny into that of Charles and Sarah. Two sequences in the screenplay, both depicting cast parties, develop their efforts in this direction. The first occurs at Mike's home, where he and his wife have invited some of the actors to celebrate the nearing conclusion of the film. The event occasions typically Pinterian exchanges between Mike and David and between Anna and Sonia, Mike's wife. For its multiple implications, the former dialogue warrants special attention.

DAVID. Have they decided how they are going to end it?
MIKE. End it?
DAVID. I hear they keep changing the script.
MIKE. Not at all. Where did you hear that?
DAVID. Well, there are two endings in the book, aren't there? A happy ending and an unhappy ending?
MIKE. Yes. We're going for the first ending—I mean the second ending.
DAVID. Which one is that?
MIKE. Hasn't Anna told you? [P. 95]

The animosity and incisiveness beneath the apparent innocence of this conversation emerge not only through the double significance of the "ending," but also through their elliptical evasions and accusations of each other. Further ironies lie in the muddled characterization of the script as a fixed enigma, in the manifestation of process, and in the fact
that neither of the novel's endings will be exactly replicated in either script, "fictional" or "real." Eventually, Anna and David leave the party, without anything conclusive passing between Anna and Mike, except a prediction of their final meeting as Sarah and Charles at Windermere.

In the novel the reunion of Charles and Sarah differs in circumstances, setting, and conclusion from that which occurs in the screenplay. Fowles, who can afford the bulk and complexity of sustained secondary plots, implies that Sam, in order to expiate an earlier betrayal of his master and to clear the debt of his own good fortunes, signals Sarah's whereabouts to Montague. Since Fowles concerns himself in more detail with Sam and Mary's future, and since he ambiguously attributes Sarah's disappearance to Sam's failure to deliver a letter and brooch from Charles to Sarah, this penance seems appropriate in the novel. Sam communicates the information to Montague when, several years after the events in Lyme, Mary reports that she has observed Sarah entering a handsome house on the Thames. Charles returns from America immediately upon receiving the cable from Montague and goes to visit Sarah at this address. In Fowles's version Sarah's situation in this house remains ominously nebulous; we know only that "she is no longer a governess" (p. 346), and that the house belongs to an amorphous collective of nefarious artists and thinkers for whom Sarah serves as a model, secretary, and assistant. The significance of her circumstances, however, lies primarily in their reversal of Charles's "assumption that fallen women must continue falling" (p. 347), and Pinter's alterations contrive to accentuate this point through visual signs.

Thus, Pinter shifts Sarah's location to the idyllic Lake Windermere and denotes her activities as an artist/governess in residence. Although it would be naive to overlook the pragmatic considerations that probably figured in this choice of setting, it would also be fruitless to speculate or comment upon them; the significant content of this shift consists in its clarity as an index of Sarah's happiness and in its enunciation of the fairytale conventions peculiar to fiction. The scene serves also in both versions as an anticipation of modern developments, but, where Fowles accomplishes this progressive quality through narrative, Pinter exhibits it in mise-en-scene.

The home on Lake Windermere, which Pinter designates "The New House," is white, full of light, and overrun by children, according to the screenplay. Pinter relieves the ambiguity and complexity in the novel by delineating Sarah's position in the household and by confessing her as the author of her own exposure. By omitting Sam's complicity both in Sarah's disappearance and in her rediscovery, Pinter
simplifies the story and emphasizes Sarah's autonomy: a characteristic he also captures in her artistry. Fowles allows sentiment to usurp the role of choice in the characters' actions and treats the existential theme only through narrative commentary, but Pinter lacks this option. Instead, Pinter softens the environment to evoke the fairytale, but hardens the circumstances to focus the act of choice. In the penultimate ending of the novel, Sarah's revelation of their common child brings them together; in the screenplay they are brought together by their freedom. Pinter demystifies Sarah's intentions by rendering her the author of Charles's invitation to the house and by revealing her need to offer herself to Charles not from desperation, but from freedom. Likewise, Charles's decision to accept her derives from her revelation not of a child, but of his freedom; she disarms him, as always, by doing the unexpected.

Charles. To make a mockery of love, of all human feeling. Is that all Exeter meant to you? One brief transaction of the flesh? Only that? You have planted a dagger in me and your 'damned freedom' gives you licence to twist it in my heart. Well, no more!

He strides to the door. She seizes his arm.

Sarah. No!

He flings her away, violently.

Charles. Yes!

She falls to the floor, hitting her head. He stops. She sits up, holding her head. He stares down at her. She looks up at him. She smiles. [Pp. 101-2]

In this manner Sarah challenges Charles once again to imitate her freedom, to drop his posture of indignation and permit their unification as a freely chosen option. They transcend their circumstances by casting aside role constraints (in the film Anna seems almost to break character at this moment), but, ironically, this freedom exists only inside the constraints of fiction. Mimicking Fowles's introduction of the love child, Pinter underlines the cliche of the happy ending with his final, and original, image of the couple.


A rowing boat is emerging from the darkness of a boathouse on to the lake. Sarah sits in the prow, Charles is by the oars. As the boat glides out into the calm evening water Charles begins to row slowly. [Pp. 102-3]

Like Fowles, however, Pinter will now repudiate this conclusion, exposing the fragility of its artifice.

The happy ending that belongs to fiction is both envied and contradicted by real experience. Fowles indicates this condition by pretending to withdraw his narrator, and then describing the actions of Charles and
Sarah in the "absence" of this artifice. In this second version of the ending, Charles abandons Sarah, refusing to be manipulated and protecting his integrity. The novel closes by noting that both endings are equally plausible, "that there is no intervening god beyond whatever can be seen . . . only life as we have, within our hazard-given abilities, made it ourselves, life as Marx defined it—the actions of men (and of women) in pursuit of their ends" (p. 365). Pinter, of course, achieves this statement through the final divergence of his dual plot lines; Mike and Anna's demand that their lives imitate the pattern of fiction meets with failure, just as Monroe Stahr's similar insistence met a similar doom. The party that celebrates completion of the film also marks a liberation from a scripted future between Mike and Anna, since they had adopted the script as a model and mechanism for their own relationship. Without the dictates of fiction, they find decisive action impossible and allow themselves to continue, in entropic fashion, on the course of least resistance, perpetuating established relationships and lifestyles.

Pinter's depiction of the party that releases the cast and countryside from their fictional postures includes several remarkable directions, some of which were deleted from the film. The licentious, intemperate behavior of the actors, suddenly liberated from their masks of Victorian propriety, is emphatic; the "Prostitute" dances with "Mr. Freeman," "Sam" dances with "Mrs. Poulteney," and "Ernestina" performs a fan dance in a Victorian corset. In the midst of this incongruous debauchery, Mike and Anna still wear their costumes from the previous scene: a sign of their effort to confound fiction with life. A parallax results also from Pinter's choice of location for this scene; the party transpires at "The New House," simultaneously evoking the serenity and promise of its role in the fiction, and converting it into an index of modern disillusionment. Thus, when Mike, detained by social obligations, searches for Anna he duplicates Charles's route to Sarah in the final scene of the fiction. Upon reaching her dressing room, however, he finds only her wig; she has changed from her costume and left. The final shot of the screenplay shows him at the window of the room in which their fictional reunion had transpired, watching her car disappear. His desperate ejaculation, "Sarah!" (p. 104), reverberates, like Stahr's final words, as a demand that life imitate art and as a lament over the impossibility of this prospect.

The problem of freedom, of choosing and acting outside the prescriptions of an ordaining script of some kind, pervades all levels of Fowles's novel. Both the external and internal dynamics of the story feature this process as a dilemma that afflicts both the author and his characters. The Victorian era intrigues Fowles as a period during which duty served
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as an evasion of absurdity. "I had better here, as a reminder that mid-
Victorian (unlike modern) agnosticism and atheism were related strictly
to theological dogma, quote George Eliot's famous epigram: 'God is
inconceivable, immortality is unbelievable, but duty is peremptory and
absolute.' And all the more peremptory, one might add, in the presence
of such a terrible dual lapse of faith" (p. 43).

The polarity between execution of duty and exercise of choice paral­
lels the polarity between Darwin's view of history as evolutionary acci­
dents and Marx's view of it as deliberate actions. Sarah, as protagonist,
is aligned with the defiant extreme of this spectrum, but Charles oscil­
lates between the two poles; "He had not the benefit of existential
terminology; but 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" (p. 267). Essentially, Charles's
recognition of his release from conventions duplicates the conditions of
a withdrawn script; he must now choose for himself. Examples of con­
formity and nonconformity with artificial restraints are ubiquitous and
eclectic in the novel, ranging from Fowles's inculcations of his own
craft to the paleontological, sociological, economic, behavioral, and
philosophical problems intrinsic in the story. In each of these catego­
ries, as in Charles's confrontation with the terror of freedom, definition
is exposed as an artifice imposed on a profound, inscrutable chaos.

Pinter's metaphor for this situation, the film-within-a-film, evokes a
similar statement and describes similar restraints. Except for Sarah,
who consistently invents the pattern of her life and who remains, nonethe­
less, a figment of fiction, each of Pinter's characters, Victorian or
modern, obeys the restrictions of some extrinsic artifice. Although the
dynamic between Pinter's diachronic plots retrieves and enriches many
of the novel's techniques and concerns, its foremost achievement lies in
its approximation of Fowles's diametric endings. Both writers, by
means of similar pretexts, imply that perfect endings are the stuff of
fiction. When Fowles withdraws his "narrator" and when Pinter with­
draws his "script," the stories conclude otherwise, accentuating not
only the artifices of fiction and imposed definition, but also the mystery
of autonomous choice.

For Fowles and for Pinter, the form of the story affirms its themes. In
both media the ideas related to time and artifice are reflected in the
structural constitution of the text. The double ending becomes particu­
larly significant as a structural effect because it provides formal har­
mony with the narrative's concerns; an inconclusive, paradoxical
conclusion seems only appropriate for this tale of ambiguity and irreco­
cncilable facts. In the novel the initial ending chronicles Charles's pref-
ference for the ambiguities of freedom (Sarah) over the amenities of convention (Ernestina); the second ending concedes that even this act of liberation represents only a conformity with the author's ideology. Thus, in Fowles's alternate ending, Charles defies not only Victorian convention, but also narrative convention by resisting the tradition of reunion.

Pinter's expression of this final dichotomy in the story assumes a different form and implication because his treatment of the relation between artist and creation has deviated from that of Fowles. Although both versions of the work include evidence of the individual's unsatisfiable desires to ordain experience in accordance with the prescriptions of fiction and to liberate fiction from the ordinances of experience, the external tensions between artist and creation are reversed; where Fowles endeavors to free his characters from authorial tyranny, Pinter's "actors" struggle to insinuate themselves into fiction. Consequently, the second ending, through which Fowles abdicates and derails his story, becomes for Pinter an abdication and derailment of his "actors'" efforts to emulate art. Through this device of contradictory endings, however, both Fowles and Pinter extend the condition of inconclusiveness beyond the internal action of the story, referring the problem of enclosure, in all its dialectical complexity, to the reader or spectator. This transfer of dilemma from within the story to outside of it announces, in its very hiatus, the final unity of form and content in both renditions of the work.

We have previously noted Pinter's thematic concern, particularly in The Go-Between, The Proust Screenplay, and The Last Tycoon, with the nationalization of experience, and we have noted the presence of this enterprise in his original plays, Old Times and No Man's Land. Consistent with this strategy for controlling and comprehending past or predicted situations, Pinter's characters in these later plays fabricate "memories" as techniques for manipulating each other. One example of such a conceit occurs near the conclusion of Old Times, when Kate avenges herself by annihilating her two "suitors," who have sought all evening to appropriate her through contrived memories. Kate's speech, a version of the past that is empirically false ("I remember you dead"), actually operates as a metaphorical summary of the action of the play and, in its calculation for immediate effect on others, closely resembles the manner of Sarah's deceptive recollection of her betrayal by the French lieutenant. What Karel Reisz has said about Sarah is equally true of Kate: "Partly, it's a story she is making up for herself while looking back at us over her shoulder—at us and Charles—to see what effect it's having." Pinter, himself, has made similar comments regarding ma-
neuvers by characters in *Old Times*, suggesting that Deeley enlists "re-
membrance" as a tactic for affecting Anna. "The fact that they discuss
something that he says took place—even if it did not take place—
actually seems to me to recreate the time and the moments vividly in the
present, so that it is actually taking place before your eyes—by the
words he is using. By the end of this particular section of the play, they
are sharing something in the present."

Prevarication about the past for the sake of intrigue in the present is
seminal, as we have seen in the comparison between the stories of Aston
and Barrett, even in Pinter's early work. Various themes in *The French
Lieutenant's Woman* (1981) have evolved demonstrably from Pinter's
current concerns and over the course of his career as a writer. We find in
*Betrayal* (1978), for example, Pinter's own treatment of the past as it is
imbedded in the present, a theme we have observed throughout *The
French Lieutenant's Woman*. In the final chapter of this book, we shall
examine these and other correspondences between Pinter's work as an
adaptor and his original writing.