

## Past tragedies

# Hella S. Haasse

## The Garden House



**H**ELLA S. HAASSE is renowned for her historical novels. They are intelligent, exciting, and well-documented; they take the reader by surprise and lead one back, compellingly, to another time and place. When she uses contemporary settings for her novels and stories, she generally writes about ordinary people, characters engaged in a profound struggle with personal choices and circumstances.

*Het tuinhuis* (The Garden House), a collection of the short stories that Haasse has written during her rich and long authorship, proves that she can create the same effects with fewer words. Most remarkable is the way in which Haasse subtly and imperceptibly lures the reader into a new atmospheric setting each time, imparting the characters' dilemmas, fears, and desires in an instant. The mood in Haasse's stories is often threatening, such as in the powerful title story in which a mother and daughter are locked in a subtle and at the same time painful psychological struggle.

Often a tragedy from the past emerges between the lines. This is the case in 'Perkara', in which the Dutch present and the Dutch East Indian past are expertly intertwined. The past imposes itself even more forcefully in 'Het portret' (The Portrait), in which a family drama is depicted in a single photograph. The picture brings home just how far a genteel family have descended from their origins as well as the fact that their souls are filled with illusions: 'He who is hindered by that which is missing, complements it with clutter.'

The story 'Genius loci' demonstrates yet again Haasse's ability to bring places to life with powerful, fascinating, and dark descriptions. The female protagonist senses that somebody is watching her from the woods surrounding her French house. 'The invisible presence didn't seem threatening; she felt no fear but rather a vague disquiet. Something was expected of her, but she didn't know what it was.' Haasse creates the mood with just a few elegant, razor sharp strokes of her pen.



photo Roy Tee

Hella S. Haasse was born in Batavia (present-day Jakarta) and moved to the Netherlands after finishing secondary school. In 1948 she made her name with *Oeroeg* (Forever a Stranger), which quickly became a Dutch literary classic. *Het woud der verwachting* (In a Dark Wood Wandering, 1949), *De ingewijden* (The Insiders, 1957), and *Mevrouw Bentinck of Onverenigbaarheid van karakter* (Mrs. Bentinck or Irreconcilable in Character, 1978) were also extremely successful. Some of her more recent novels are *Heren van de thee* (The Tea Merchants, 1992) and *Sleutelooi* (Eye of the Key, 2002). Haasse has received several prestigious literary awards.

*Infinitely intriguing.*

*HET FINANCIËLE DAGBLAD*

*Vibrant phrasing, interesting characters and lots of mystery.* *NRC HANDELSBLAD*

*Het tuinhuis displays Haasse's mastery.* *TROUW*

*Literary jewels.* *DE TELEGRAAF*

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### SELECTED TITLES IN TRANSLATION

*L'anneau de la clé* (Sleutelooi). Arles: Actes Sud, 2004. Also in Italian (Iperborea, 2006), and in Spanish (Edhasa, 2006).  
*Wald der Erwartung* (Het woud der verwachting). Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999. Also in English (Academy Chicago Publishers, 1997), in French (Seuil, 1991), and in many other languages.  
*Die Teebarone* (Heren van de thee). Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2001. Also in French (Seuil, 1996), in Italian (Rizzoli, 1997), and in many other languages.  
*The Scarlet City* (De scharlaken stad). Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1990. Also in German (Rowohlt, 1994), in French (Seuil, 1997).



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Sample Translation

*Genius Loci*

(Genius Loci)

by Hella S. Haasse

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Translated by Ina Rilke

**W**hen they bought the land, she was not sure how she felt about the place. There was something in the air that confused her. She was delighted, enchanted, but felt she was treading forbidden ground.

“Sacer” was the word that came to mind: hallowed and cursed in one.

She had to admit that the site - on the south-western slope of a hill with dense woods, remnants of an age-old forest - was an ideal location for a summer house. Her husband declared at first sight that it was just what they were looking for. This would become their annual retreat, two national frontiers removed from their city home.

The building was erected within a few months: a compact, functional dwelling for warm seasons. They drove from their own country to the chosen spot several times to see how the construction was progressing. While he discussed technicalities with the builders, she roamed the surroundings, suffused with an ambivalent emotion which she could not name, although it had been with her from the moment they turned off the motorway and entered the forest.

When the walls were mortared and the rafters in place, she crossed the threshold of the future dwelling for the first time. Through the gaping holes for the door and windows and the timber frame overhead, she could see the forest. The trees were budding with leaf, a green haze floated about the branches. In the forest she had picked a bunch of wild daffodils which grew there in abundance, the earliest blooms of the year. She laid the flowers on the cement floor.

Her husband could not suppress a smile at her gesture: a peace offering to the genius loci, an atonement for having trespassed on its domain?

She could not possibly tell him of the feeling she had had on the forest path as if she were being followed, or observed from the bushes. There was no menace in that invisible presence, she was not afraid, but she did feel an indefinable disquiet. Something was expected of her, but she did not know what. In that first summer she was often alone for several days on end, when her husband had business to attend to in the periods before and after his official holiday. At such times she realized how remote their dwelling was. There were days when she saw

no one aside from the postman, who came in his yellow mail van to deliver letters and newspapers. Correspondents were struck by the curious address: Le Puits Renaud, in the municipality of Vy. She occupied herself with routine tasks, tidied rooms that were already tidy, or worked in the garden, a strip of ground around the house raised with heavy black compost and planted with shrubs and flowers that would not grow in the poor forest soil.

As long as she was in the house, or within the confines of the garden and terrace, she felt entirely at ease, although from time to time she caught herself interrupting her occupations to stare at the tall frontage of trees beyond the fence, where the forest began. The foliage always seemed to be in motion, even when there was hardly a breath of wind: a whisper of leaves, a faint creaking of branches. She could hear birdsong, a scala ranging from simple twittering to intriguing scales. A cuckoo called, pigeons cooed. Most of all she was fascinated by the glancing play of light and shade on the endless varieties of green. The previous evening, when the low sun bathed the tree trunks in a pink glow and lined the branches with gold, the trees at the bottom of her garden had formed a luminous tracery against the deep shadows of the forest beyond.

She noticed that she had a heightened awareness of her moods and thoughts. One morning she awakened to the feeling that her life had slipped by without her really experiencing it. She was still in bed; through the window she had a view of the tops of some sea pines, starkly outlined against the morning sky. In their rugged crowns she could make out sharp-nosed, bulge-eyed profiles, rather like wayang puppets: fiendish faces swaying in the breeze, nodding, imperceptibly changing expression. Gashes in the canopy, through which the pale sky was visible, reminded her of fierce eyes, glittering teeth.

For her that summer was marked by the physical transition known as “the change”, a term she found irksome for its ambiguity. It evoked the ineluctable passing of a certain phase of life, but also seemed to intimate a future state of mind that was worth attaining. But what was there to anticipate now other than a gradual resignation to old age, an initiation into death? Oddly enough there were

moments when she had the sensation of being young again, as though her youth would last for ever. At other times she felt ageless.

Secure in the knowledge that her husband (pillar of tranquillity) was at home, reading on the terrace or glancing through reports and documents at his desk by the open French windows, she would venture out into the environs. She took long walks, initially only along the narrow tarmac road across the forest. Her landmarks were the clearings where the trees felled by woodcutters lay stacked, ready for removal: pines with deeply gouged bark, smooth beeches thinly swathed in moss, some of them sprouting saucer-like yellow fungi.

After a while she left the paved road, taking paths deep into the forest and eventually straying even from them. She parted bushes, waded through weeds and bracken. Thickets of brambles, fallen tree trunks and webs of tough bindweed forced her to make detour after detour. There was a mysterious, exciting quality to her expeditions, which reminded her of when she was a child seeking places to hide. Her husband teased her about her newfound wanderlust, so unlike her initial “atavistic fear of the Unholy Forest”.

One day she caught sight of an archer with a long-bow in a glade. She was startled: he was like an apparition from a different age. Afterwards she found she could not remember his features, only that he had worn a tunic and cap of a greenish grey shade: the huntsman’s mimicry. She saw him arch his bow and then shoot an arrow, but could not see his target. The archer paused as though straining to hear, then strode in the direction of his arrow and vanished into the underwood. Thinking back to that encounter, it occurred to her that she had not actually seen or heard the archer leave the glade. He had been absorbed by the forest, had melted quietly into the surroundings, his clothing yet another nuance in the myriad shades of green, his long-bow yet another branch amid the foliage.

She knew that archery was the leading sport in the region. There was not a village or town without a shooting range, and competitions were held all summer. Still, she was bemused by the archer’s behaviour. Was it permitted to practise

outside the confines of a marked-off course? He had arched his bow so purposefully. Where was his target?

She did not mention the incident. She knew that her present surroundings, in the summer silence and isolation, made her all the more susceptible to what she called the cinema of her imagination: scenes which she would not conjure up deliberately but which would suddenly, usually between waking and sleeping, loom and fade in the dark behind her closed eyelids. Ever since childhood she had lived with this secret other world: faces, settings, shapes and colours coming into sharp focus, then melting into a following image. It was as though she were an onlooker to an anterior existence.

The sight of a damp stain on a wall or the grain in wood or marble could unleash vague memories of these scenes, which were evidently recorded somewhere on her retina. Music, too, could affect her thus, or the shifting light. Now she was living in the summer house the cryptic images came up more often, there seemed to be some affinity with the reality of her surroundings. The images were often of the same landscape viewed from a hill, with shadows of clouds coursing across green and yellow fields; or of wheel tracks on a sandy forest lane; or of long grasses flattened by a downpour; or of frost-rimed boughs against a sky sparkling with winter. And there was always a strangeness about these visions, despite their familiarity, something at odds with her own perception or recollection. These impressions were more than visual, they moved all her senses. She inhaled the aroma of leather and manure and herbs, of acrid smoke; her fingertips and palms seemed to be acquainted with the shape and touch of utensils she had never used, had never known. Sounds reached her, the clip-clop of horses' hooves on cobblestones, the chime of bells, the squeak of a chain running in a pulley. From the corner of her eye she saw something move: a wide mantle flapping in the wind, a hand raising a beaker, a head bowed over a candle, the face, lit from below, thrown into glowing relief against an obscure, dusky background. She understood - how she did not know - what it was like to sleep on

a sack filled with foul-smelling straw. She suffered bouts of acute pain - imagined pain, she told herself - as if a wild animal were gnawing at her joints. Was that a signal of physical decline? Were the recurring images, the glimpses and flashes of a differently intuited reality connected in any way to her “change”? Who am I, what am I? she asked herself.

They had been married for close on thirty years, their children were grown up, and they were bound by a loyal affection that grew with the years. He was a respected authority in his field, increasingly involved in major projects; but she did not live in his shadow. Without neglecting such duties as her position demanded, she had created a life for herself in keeping with her pensive, withdrawn nature. Now that her daughter and two sons had left home, she was often alone. She was never bored. She read, listened to music, and devoted herself to her tapestry, which would take years to complete. It was of feudal dimensions (surpassed in length only by the Bayeux tapestry, as her husband had joked): an abstract pattern of interlaced lines on a dark ground, into which countless shades of green had been worked. She had a small room for a studio, where she would sit before her large embroidery frame surrounded with balls of wool and skeins of silk and flanked by the scrolled ends of her tapestry, the finished part on the left, the as yet unworked canvas on the right. She had not sketched a design. The shapes and colours came to mind as she went along. She did not think of herself as an artist, nor of what she might do with her handiwork once it was finished. The satisfaction of the sheer number and diversity of stitches became her goal.

She had not moved the cumbersome frame to the summer house. Roaming the forest each day provided her with living models in the subtle shading of the foliage and the contrasting lines of twigs and branches. Green is the colour of solitude. Green is soothing.

One thing had been denied to her. It had never come her way. She had imagined it, but did not know whether her idea corresponded to reality. She had never

spoken of this incompleteness, this lack, but had mulled it over all the more. She loved her husband, did not wish for another man, had never sought to be loved by another. From the first day of their life together she had welcomed his desire, moved as she was by her own longing to respond with her body to the language of his. That language was sincere, the passion mature, but still each embrace left her conscious that there had been no ultimate union, no sharing of that experience of which, to quote a medieval poet, “all songs sing”. She was not ashamed, for there was no blame to be apportioned, not on her side nor on his. The idea of seeking help, as if there were a physical or psychological issue to discuss, repelled her. The quality of their marriage brooked no clinical scrutiny. Most of all she was perturbed by the question whether it was unfair towards him to keep silent about her inexplicable and unwilling lack of satisfaction. The thought that a confession might undermine his confidence and thereby trouble their relationship held her back.

She felt excluded, a stranger to the world of men and women she associated with. The sensual air and outspokenness of her daughter and her sons’ girlfriends made her keenly aware that she was ignorant where she should have been knowing. At times she compared herself to some creature who suffered from a growth deficiency, which she felt doomed to conceal under specially designed clothing for the rest of her life.

She was surprised to find she had not explored the part of the forest bordering their land as thoroughly as she had imagined. She came upon a natural hollow, a wilderness of weeds and half-decayed tree trunks. Lured by torches of foxglove and tall purple plumes she picked her way forward; parting low-hanging thorny branches and brushing aside cobwebs she discovered an old well. The stone curb was crumbling and the masonry lining had collapsed, blocking the shaft. This had to be the Puits Renaud.

Her husband thought there must have been a farm once, on the land that was now theirs. But on their walks they had not come across any traces of human

settlement. According to the cadastral registers, which they consulted in the town hall of Vy, the south-western slope had been uninhabited since time immemorial. However, there was also a map, dating from 1700, upon which Le Puits Renaud was marked with a cross. No one knew where the name came from. High on the hill were the remains of the tower of the ancient castle of Vy: a man-high semi-circular wall, thickly creeped and besieged by a tangle of green. Unless one knew it was there its presence was imperceptible.

In a guidebook to the region they read about the Lords of Vy who in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had controlled the intersecting roads from on high. Their jurisdiction extended to several villages, including a church and a market. Perhaps the well had been dug by these nobles, who claimed all the forest covering the slopes and the fringes beyond as their hunting-ground.

She was surprised at her own doggedness in searching for answers she was unlikely to find. She wanted to know who this Renaud was who had given his name to the well and to their plot of land. A retired schoolmaster in Vy, an amateur historian, referred her to the archives of an abbey nearby. From the records there she learnt that there had been a habitation of a kind on the south-western slope until well into the sixteen hundreds: a leproserie, which had its origins in the dwelling constructed by the Lords of Vy for the benefit of a single leper, possibly a member of the family. The ancient chronicles recorded the presence of this leper on the land for over fifty years. The disease must have been uncommonly slow to take its toll, for the victim was known to three successive generations as the “hermite ladre” of the forest. After his death the place continued to be called Le Puits Renaud. In the reign of Louis XIV the leproserie was relocated, whereupon the cottages were burnt down and the unclean well filled in. That the origins of the name had faded from memory, opined the learned friar in charge of the archives, was due to the age-old dread of leprosy. The disfigurement was regarded as a sign of depravity, the disease itself as punishment for past sins. Lepers were outcasts, the living dead.

She saw the site now occupied by her house with new eyes. From now on she would always be mindful of those who had lived there before. Centuries of silence and forest growth could not erase the suffering, the desolation. This Renaud-of-the-well, who had suffered the fate of the unclean, did not leave her thoughts.

The library of the nearest provincial town had a large collection devoted to the history of the region. Her queries were received with interest and offers of assistance, as they had been at the abbey. In the reading room, with high windows looking out on the flamboyant Gothic spire of the cathedral, she pored over the Vy family tree, which was exceptionally well documented. Amid all the Guiberts and Guys and Bertrands and Enguerrands there was only one member of the now extinct line, which held sway in the region from the twelfth century to the fifteenth, named Renaud. He lived from 1190 to 1209.

In her imagination the short-lived Renaud de Vy and the leper Renaud-of-the-well merged into the same person. There was no evidence, she had no explanation, but to her it was beyond dispute.

He is heedless of the first symptoms of the disease: a certain numbness of the skin, loss of hair, a change in the tone of voice. He does not feel hampered in his physical exertions. He is nineteen years old, long-limbed, his features still boyish, his countenance bright; a good horseman, indefatigable and skilled in hunting and jousting; of all his brothers and sisters his mother's favourite, and the son of whom his father has the highest expectations. Being the second son he will not inherit, but can look forward to knighthood and a place of honour in the suzerain's retinue.

He is examined by a physician from a local monastery, whose findings oblige him, in keeping with the ordinance of the church authorities, to declare the young man unclean. Within the next twenty-four hours, Renaud is an outcast.

From now on no one dares touch him. Personal items, bed linen, are thrown onto the fire. He signs his name on a document relinquishing all claims to property and waiving his rights as his father's son.

The mass for the dead is read. Kneeling, with a shroud over his head and shoulders, he attends his own obsequies. Standing at the church door, keeping a safe distance, he bids farewell to his friends and blood relations. A procession of monks escorts him to the place deep in the forest where he will live until his body expires.

It was as if she could hear the monks singing *In Paradisum deducant te angeli* hard to imagine a more bitter text - and could see the cortège headed by the glistening crucifix advancing through the trees. That final journey, she fancied, must have taken place in the summer forest, not under an autumn shower or on a sunless day in winter. She pictured him on his knees in front of the hastily constructed cabin hard by the well.

They reach him leper's clothing: one tunic of coarse linen for warm weather, another of wool for cold. They give him a wooden rattle so that he may warn others of his approach, they place a pair of sandals at his feet, and also gloves, without which he may not touch anything outside the fences of his domain. He is issued a bowl, a mug, and some tools. Still kneeling, his gaze fixed on the tough weed-infested grass, he listens while the long list of commands and injunctions is read out. He is barred from the church, the market, the taverns and anywhere else where people congregate. If he speaks to anyone he must stand facing the wind. Alleys, narrow paths and passages are prohibited to him unless they are deserted. He may not eat or drink in the company of others, unless they are lepers. He is not to draw water or wash unless at his own well.

He promises to observe these rules, after which the priest sprinkles a handful of earth over his bowed head. Then they leave him behind, with a loaf of bread and a pitcher of wine.

The numbness in the core of his being during the ceremonials has lifted, making way for an unprecedented feeling of emptiness. He stares into a waste of idle, barren time, an unfathomable black hole. There is no one to stop him howling with rage and despair, or beating his head against the ground or a tree trunk until he loses consciousness. His lamentations and passionate prayers are scattered by the wind.

On rare occasions Renaud is granted licence to gather firewood in the woods of the Lords of Vy. (Walking in the forest, hearing the crackle of dry twigs and flakes of bark underfoot, she would involuntarily strike the pose of a figure with a sack over his shoulder, collecting firewood.) He is also permitted to pluck wild berries in restricted areas. (This notion came to her as she caught sight of ripe blackberries screened by a prickly wilderness; she scratched her hands reaching for the full clusters in the thick of bramble shoots, and the juice of the bruised berries mingled with the blood beading on her torn skin.) Renaud will eventually be obliged to bandage the stumps of his hands, whereby his ability will be limited to hoisting, pushing and dragging. His deformity will eventually condemn him to beg - not that he will humble himself thus as long as he can prepare his own food in the privacy of his abode. From the very beginning it has been painful to him to be handed a purse each Sunday after mass - a gift from the lady he once called mother. The grandeur of this gesture alone is enough to set him apart from his fellows. Although unclean, he is still privileged in their eyes, with a home of his own and a well to draw his own water. Besides schadenfreude - a knight's son becomes an outcast - the disfigured faces of the others (bundles of rags on crutches, or reduced to crawling already) also show resentment at the money that enables him to keep to himself, to avoid their stench, to stay away from their overcrowded hovels. He throws them alms out of habit, unaware as yet that this merely adds to their loathing.

She often went to sit by the well, on the grass or on a tree trunk. She had cut down the thistles and nettles and cleared the rampant bindweed, leaving small cushions of flowering weeds untouched. Among the blades of grass she detected the movements of ants, a beetle, a tiny transparent green spider. The composition of the soil must have changed over the centuries, by erosion, rain and wind, and leaf fall. There was not a single particle of earth left that had been trodden by Renaud. The trees that had once cast their shadows over him and his refuge, and also the trees sprouted from the shoots of their shoots, had long since decomposed into rich humus.

According to the registers of his lineage he did not live beyond the age of nineteen. A cross had been added to his name on the day he was pronounced dead. This place where she now sat was where he had eked out his half-life, which amounted to almost half a century of lingering death. All that remained of Renaud de Vy now was her regard for him, the power of her imagination.

In the bitter cold of winter, when the boughs sag under their burden of hoarfrost and the snow lingers in the lee of the wooded slope, he forgets the comfort of living within stone walls, of sleeping in the body-warmth of the two brothers whose bed he shared since childhood. Hunched over his fire-basket during long agonizing hours of darkness, he no longer knows the comfort of sitting back in the chimney-nook, his feet on the fender, basking in the glow of leaping flames.

The traditions of his rank, the precepts of the church, the strict code of honour and duty which governed his upbringing, have all become meaningless. In the forest other laws apply, other truths. Although a scion of a devoutly Christian house of knights, he does not doubt the existence of the Women of the Wood, who live where springs burble and rocks lie strewn among the trees. He thinks with reverence of these creatures whom the Church takes for demons, and invokes their beneficence. At night, when the mist uncoils from the marshy ground by streams and pools, sending milky, transparent ribbons into the forest and always one swathe to his dale like a lady's train, a veil, he fancies - squatting

on the threshold of his cabin, sleepless - that a fairy has come to share his loneliness. He remembers tales from his childhood: how the White and Green Women, eager to improve their stock, would have mortals to father their offspring.

In his youth he swore an oath of chastity until such time as the rank of knight is conferred on him. He has never had a love-mate, nor will he ever have one.

On moonlit nights he is filled with longing for the luminous swirls of mist to mass into a cool pale body that he can embrace. Nature torments him; he is racked by disease, but his vitality is untamed.

In a book on life in the region at the time of the kings of the House of Capet, she was struck by an account of turmoil around the year thirteen hundred. There were rumours that certain lepers, driven mad by their miserable fate, had contaminated the wells in the villages. According to legend, healing could be obtained by bathing in human blood, and the lepers were subsequently accused of stealing children in order to kill them. A savage terror took hold of the population. The presumed culprits were killed without mercy. Archers acting as executioners combed the forests where lepers were said to be hiding.

He is beset by thoughts of ending his life. He knows that suicide is the gravest of sins, but what can be more sinful than to be unclean? A man bold enough to lust after the Green Women - which means forfeiting his immortal soul - does not recoil from the deed that will deliver him from a life of fetid mutilation and repulsiveness. He will not hang himself from a tree, for that is a death worthy of criminals. Nor will the knife he uses to skin wild rabbits (setting traps is permitted in his domain) serve to stab himself in the heart. He is no villain, he is entitled to the sword, if need be the arrow, and only in tournament or battle. But death in war or knightly combat is denied to him.

At a fork in the forest path he crosses an archer, whom he recognizes as a member of the Lord of Vy's retinue. It was he who instilled in Renaud the

principles of archery. He remembers the warm strong fingers gripping his hand as he drew the bow, the leathery smell emanating from his tutor's jerkin close to his boyish cheek. They stand face to face: a wordless exchange takes place. The archer cannot give a reason for seeking out the son of his lord in the forest. He has not received explicit orders, but has understood the father's secret wish. Renaud cannot find the words to express his plea: kill me, release me. Neither of them can forget why the deed they are thinking of cannot be done: there must be no suspicion that a son of the Lord of Vy might be guilty of such crimes as are imputed to lepers. There can be no deliverance by a well-aimed arrow. Renaud must endure his fate like a nobleman, stoical and uncomplaining, until the bitter end.

The archer shoots his arrow into the forest. Later he will search it out, and break it in two.

The realisation that summer was over came suddenly. The leaves were beginning to turn, there was a spicy aroma of decay in the forest. When the wind blew it was cold.

They prepared the house for its winter sleep and packed their suitcases. The afternoon before their departure she took a last walk to the well. The bracken in the dale was shot through with red, although the sun was not shining. She rested a while on the fallen beech on which she had so often sat, stroking the pale, delicate bark etched across with short dark lines; it was as though the tree were clothed in ermine. A few silky flakes, gleaming lividly, evoked a different image, reminding her of a description she had read somewhere of what leprosy does to the skin. In a sudden surge of emotion she bent down and pressed her lips to the cool trunk.

Thereupon, to her amazement and mounting incredulity, her body was gripped with a sensation she had never known before: piercing, exquisite, gathering momentum to become pure lust - not to be compared with any other sensual pleasure such as that summoned by a soaring peal of notes, a crescendo of sound,

a deepening chromatic range - a sensation that took her breath away, made her blind and deaf to the world around her and then dissolved into an unrelenting, inner convulsion. She lay quite still on the fallen trunk, her eyes moist with wonder. It was deathly quiet in the forest.

They locked the gate behind them and drove away from Le Puits Renaud. Mist floated between the trees. Where bracken grew the ground seemed to smoulder. Presently the storms would rise, and blow the leaves from the trees. Winter was in the air.