

VERSION ANGLAISE ET COURT THÈME

I. VERSION

She seemed as if she would like to say something, no doubt reaffirm her gratitude, but his stance of brisk waiting made her, after one last lingering look into his eyes, move past him.

She led the way down as neat-footedly as she had led it up. Looking down on her back, he felt tinges of regret. Not to see her thus again ... regret and relief. A remarkable young woman. He would not forget her; and it seemed some consolation that he would not be allowed to. Aunt Tranter would be his future spy.

They came to the base of the lower cliff, and went through the first tunnel of ivy, over the clearing, and into the second green corridor – and then!

There came from far below, from the main path through the Undercliff, the sound of a stifled peal of laughter. Its effect was strange – as if some wood-spirit had been watching their clandestine meeting and could now no longer bottle up her – for the laugh was unmistakably female – mirth at their foolish confidence in being unseen.

Charles and Sarah stopped as of one accord. Charles's growing relief was instantaneously converted into a shocked alarm. But the screen of ivy was dense, the laugh had come from two or three hundred yards away; they could not have been seen. Unless as they came down the slope ... a moment, then she swiftly raised a finger to her lips, indicated that he should not move, and then herself stole along to the end of the tunnel. Charles watched her crane forward and stare cautiously down towards the path. Then her face turned sharply back to him. She beckoned – he was to go to her, but with the utmost quietness; and simultaneously that laugh came again. It was quieter this time, yet closer. Whoever had been on the path had left it and was climbing up through the ash trees towards them.

Charles trod cautiously towards Sarah, making sure of each place where he had to put his wretchedly unstealthy boots. He felt himself flushing, most hideously embarrassed. No explanation could hold water for a moment. However he was seen with Sarah, it must be *in flagrante delicto*.

He came to where she stood, and where the ivy was fortunately at its thickest. She had turned away from the interlopers and stood with her back against a tree-trunk, her eyes cast down, as if in mute guilt for having brought them both to this pass. Charles looked through the leaves and down the slope of the ashgrove – and his blood froze. Coming up towards them, as if seeking their same cover, were Sam and Mary. Sam had his arm around the girl's shoulders. [...] They were young lovers as plain as the ashes were old trees.

John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 1969.

II THÈME

Les habitués du salon jaune restèrent encore un instant, bavards comme des commères qu'un serin envolé réunit sur un trottoir. Ces négociants retirés, ces marchands d'huile, ces fabricants de chapeaux nageaient en plein drame féérique. Jamais pareille secousse ne les avait remués. Ils ne revenaient pas de ce qu'il se fût révélé, parmi eux, des héros tels que Rougon, Granoux et Roudier. Puis, étouffant dans le salon, las de se raconter entre eux la même histoire, ils éprouvèrent une vive démangeaison d'aller publier la grande nouvelle; ils disparurent un à un, piqués chacun par l'ambition d'être le premier à tout savoir, à tout dire; et Félicité, restée seule, penchée à la fenêtre, les vit qui se dispersaient dans la rue de la Banne, effarouchés, battant des bras comme de grands oiseaux maigres, soufflant l'émotion aux quatre coins de la ville.

Émile Zola, *La Fortune des Rougon*, 1872.