

An indictment of child labour

Klinkkaart

PIET VAN AKEN

Flanders at the end of the 19th century. A young girl from a working-class family gets up early for her first day at the brickworks. This first day at work means both the end of her childhood years and her 'initiation' into adult life.

A fast-paced and nuanced story, a strong indictment of the exploitation of the child

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She makes her first acquaintance with the gruelling work, the brutality of the workers and the tyranny of Krevelt, the dreaded boss. As an initiation, the girl must first undergo the so-called 'coronation', a humiliating test that the workers subject all newcomers to. Then, there is the notorious Krevelt. He believes he has a right to her virginity, and when evening falls, he attempts to lure her into his office... She can see only one way out: the young love that blossoms between her and an apprentice. But will that be enough of an anchor to keep her from drifting into the danger that fate is mercilessly pushing her towards?

Piet van Aken's novels were predominantly written with a deep awareness for the living conditions of workers, especially those that were underage. His world is an arena of struggles, intrigue and political-ideological or social conflicts. 'Klinkkaart' clearly fits into this tradition: it is an outspoken indictment of the exploitation of child workers.

Van Aken writes with such control, compassion and pent-up indignation, that his brutal story acquires an intensely warm sheen of truly great beauty

STREVEN

Piet
van Aken
Klinkkaart



manteau

AUTHOR



Piet van Aken (1920-1984) wrote socially-engaged stories. In that vein, he is considered a successor to Cyriel Buysse and Stijn Streuvels, and is grouped together with his contemporaries Louis Paul Boon and Gerard Walschap. Van Aken gives an authentic form to major themes such as power, property and loneliness, as he does in his novella 'Klinkkaart'. Using practical language at a dazzling pace with captivating style, he proves his affinity with Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and John Dos Passos. In 1966 he was awarded the Flemish State Prize for Narrative Prose.

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