

Home revisited

# Return to Neerpelt

LIEVE JORIS

Lieve Joris has acquired an international reputation as an author of non-fiction travelogues. For many years she travelled around Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and more recently China, and considered the world to be her village. Now she has returned to Flanders, to Neerpelt, to the house by the canal where she grew up as the middle child in a chaotic family of nine. As a young girl, she is drawn to her grandmother, as a teenager she falls under the spell of Fonny, her artistic eldest brother. He unleashes a wind of freedom and shows her a way out of the village, even though he himself remains behind and ends up going off the rails. His decline drives a wedge between her father – to whom he is the Biblical ‘prodigal son’ – and the other children. Fonny divides them, but keeps them together at the same time.

## An amazing portraitist

LE MONDE

Through trial and error, Lieve Joris carves out a place for herself in the world. But she cannot escape the people in the house by the canal. Her native village was a place to get away from, yet her return was always inevitable. As well as a portrait of an era, this family saga also paints the picture of a village girl who, contrary to her predestined course in life, finds her way to writing.

## Lieve Joris views half the world as her village. Therein lies the universal and personal power of her books.

ONS ERFDEEL



## AUTHOR



**Lieve Joris** (b. 1953) has built an international reputation as a writer of nonfiction, with books about the Middle East, Africa and Hungary. She emerges as an engaged observer, able to convey the atmosphere of postcolonial Africa with great authenticity. She has the astonishing gift of being able to unite the broad picture with its details, somehow managing to combine analysis and storytelling without ever losing the thread of either. *Photo © Atlas Contact*

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