

The strong woman behind the first Belgian expedition to the South Pole

High Tide, Blue Moon

JOLIEN JANZING

Antwerp, late nineteenth century: Léonie Osterrieth, a cultured widow, organizes salons in her grand townhouse. Amongst her guests are musicians, writers and artists, but Léonie has a soft spot for explorers. She would love to travel to far continents herself, but her opportunities are limited as a woman. She helps Adrien de Gerlache to become the first human being to overwinter on the South Pole. Thanks to her lobbying and money-raising efforts, the three-master *Belgica* sets sail from the port of Antwerp. Adrien is the commander of the international crew, which includes the famous Roald Amundsen and Frederick Cook. On arrival in Antarctica, things start to go wrong: the ship gets stuck in the polar ice and the crew face a harsh winter. They survive by eating penguin and seal meat.

Janzing draws you into an Impressionist painting and makes you part of the scene

DE STANDAARD

Drawing on the correspondence between Léonie and her entourage, Janzing reconstructs the experiences of captain and crew, making you feel as if you are there, but she also zooms in on those who are left at home and who can only guess at what is happening on the other side of the world. In doing so, Janzing gives Léonie Osterrieth the tribute she deserves. Without this emancipated businesswoman, bohemian and cultural lynchpin, the *Belgica* would never have reached Antarctica. And through this original and flamboyant protagonist the author manages to breathe life into the belle époque, which was known as much for its fascination with undiscovered land as for the straitjacket imposed on women. With plenty of vivid details and in an accessible and compelling style, Janzing reconstructs the most remarkable expedition ever undertaken from Belgium.



AUTHOR



Jolien Janzing (b. 1964) is a seasoned author of historical stories both for adults and for children. She has a keen sense of how to shed light on the past and how to connect the local with the global from a little known and barely researched perspective. In doing so she often chooses exceptional women as her central characters. For each book she conducts thorough research but succeeds in doling out the historical information in such a way that her novels are invariably highly readable. Her writing style is filmic in nature.

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