

The rise and fall of a Belgian princess

# Carlota, The Woman Who Ate Roses

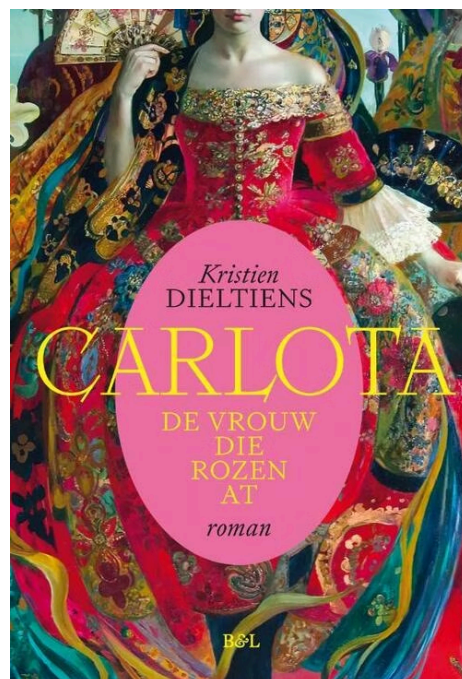
KRISTIEN DIELTIENS

Charlotte of Belgium, daughter of King Leopold I, is ten years old when she loses her mother and is left with an emotionally unreachable father. She longs for love and thinks she has found it in Maximilian, archduke of Austria. She soon enters into a lonely existence in a loveless and childless marriage. Along with her husband, she travels to Mexico to serve her new country as Empress Carlota. But there a revolution is brewing, and the promised support of Napoleon III and the royal houses of Europe fails to materialize. Maximilian's overseas adventure ends in front of a firing squad. Carlota never recovers from that trauma. She is pursued by delusions, suffers from paranoia and constantly thinks someone intends to kill her. She ends up back in Belgium, 'imprisoned' in a castle, guarded by doctors. From her last place of residence she tells her life story in a long letter to B., her illegitimate son, in an attempt to disentangle the great mysteries of her life.

**An exciting whodunnit and a wonderful piece of biofiction**

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After years of research, Dieltiens manages with consummate skill to enter into the inner life of her character. In language rich in imagery, she shows us a fascinating woman, who flounders and, despite being driven to madness, obstinately tries to keep her head above water. 'Carlota, The Woman Who Ate Roses' is an engrossing historical novel that opens up remarkable worlds: that of the royal house and the nobility, that of a powerfully evocative Mexico, and that of the human spirit, which after loneliness and longing flirts with madness. In this fictional biography, Charlotte of Belgium has her honour restored, in sparkling prose.



## AUTHOR



**Kristien Dieltiens** (b. 1954) started writing and playing music at a young age. Since her debut in 1997, she has published over a hundred books, of which several have been translated. Dieltiens is at her best when writing historical stories. Her main characters are often outcasts who have to find a place for themselves. She writes evocatively, with humour and she loves a good intrigue. *Photo © Bas Bogaerts*

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**TRANSLATION RIGHTS** Marisca van der Mark - m.vandermark@schonbach.nl

**TRANSLATION GRANTS** Marieke Roels - marieke@flandersliterature.be, Elise Vanoosthuysen - elise@flandersliterature.be, Yannick Geens - yannick@flandersliterature.be

**Dieltiens' style excels in its wealth of words, language and its many metaphors.**