

Three generations ground to pieces by time

The Times

ELVIS PEETERS

In 'The Times', writing duo Elvis Peeters describes how history operates upon the lives of three people of three generations.

Farmer's son Emiel is a child during the Second World War. After the war he experiences repression from close proximity. It turns him into a convinced pacifist, who hopes to find a better life as a farmer in Congo. But things turn out differently: his father dies and Emiel takes over the farm, which because of European agricultural reforms he is forced to sell. Eventually he has to take a job in a factory.

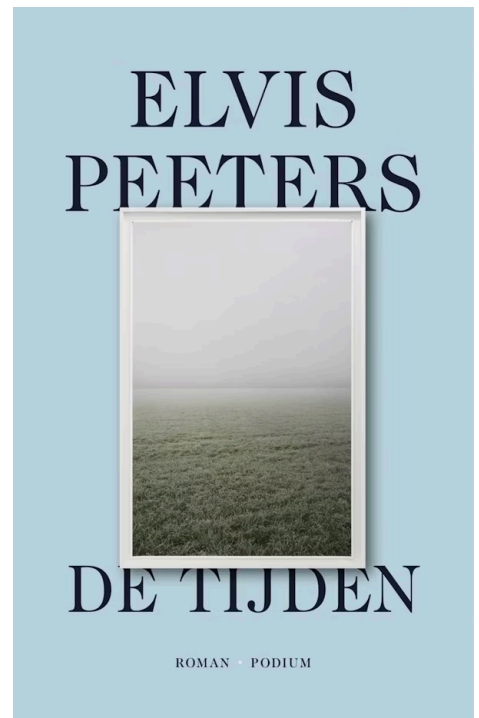
Emiel's daughter Hannelore demonstrates against cruise missiles, becomes a fan of 'no future' punk and moves to London to earn a living in the world of advertising and marketing. But the impetuous Hannelore is less liberated than she seems. She's forced to recognize that the outside world is a step ahead of her.

Matteo, finally, Hannelore's law student son, becomes president of his student fraternity, in which racism and sexism are rampant. After he graduates he is seduced by the extreme right, longing for a Europe that no longer exists. Matteo, aware of how the earth is creaking under overproduction and the climate crisis, travels to Poland to live in a primal forest along with other European Enlightenment idealists, and to prepare for whatever else time might bring.

As intrusive as it is inescapable, that's how pitiless time is. Elvis Peeters seeks a way through it beautifully. ****

HET NIEUWSBLAD

As well as being an ideological family history, 'The Times' is a novel about the countryside versus the city, the individual versus the masses and socialism versus capitalism, and about modernization and increases in scale. Music connects the generations at lightning speed. Each chapter starts with a snatch of music, from jazz through punk and Bowie to David Guetta and Dua Lipa. But the characters are bound together by more than just music and a family connection, since all three take a stand against their own era and ultimately have to pay the price.



AUTHOR



Writing duo Elvis Peeters (b. 1957) writes fiction, poetry, scripts and children's books. They pour their social engagement and activism into beautifully crafted and unique narratives. In their novels, they succeed in addressing fascinating moral issues through what appears to be a simple story. In their picture books they're able to create maximum (poetic) effect with a minimum of words. Photo © Siska Vandecasteele

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Provocatively, propulsively written