

Personal history versus history writ large

Lost

INGRID VANDER VEKEN

In 'Lost' Ingrid Vander Veken uses individual stories to describe the lesser-known pathways of the great events of history. She was contacted by the relatives of a family smashed to pieces by the Second World War, asking her whether, based on a paper archive, she would be willing to search for traces of a woman who, along with her young son, fled Nazi persecution for four years only to die in Auschwitz.

In the book, especially in the first few pages, she makes no secret of her hesitation, cautiously getting to know the material offered to her and feeling out the possibilities. This proved far from simple. To make the book a success, she needed to trace the course of lives that had almost vanished and weave them into a story.

Her approach testifies to a great concern and respect for the people she portrays. While determined to do justice to personal histories, she also wants to fit them into a larger story. World history, after all, rumbles on in the background. Ingrid Vander Veken perseveres, and rightly so, as it turns out. Her search reveals that chance had a big part to play. 'Lost', which began with such caution, emerges as a keenly felt and haunting account of the various escape routes during the Second World War: those who went into hiding, those who fled, the emigrants, and even events in the Dutch East Indies, which are less than well known to most Flemings.

Compelling, moving, astonishingly true to life – a masterpiece!

HERMAN VAN GOETHEM



AUTHOR



Ingrid Vander Veken (b. 1948) is a writer, who following several theatre scripts and screenplays, made her prose debut in 1991 with the collection 'Tiramisu'. Since then she has published novels, stories, children's books and a diary. As a journalist she has worked for several newspapers and magazines, mainly covering cultural topics. Vander Veken has taught at the Word department of the Antwerp Conservatorium and now teaches prose at Creatief Schrijven.

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