

The monotony and finiteness of life

Life and Death in the Chicory Kiln

STIJN STREUVELS

Streuvelds describes one night in which three labourers are carrying out their work in a chicory drying kiln. In that one night, their lives are turned upside down and they realise that the many dreams they still cherish will no longer be possible to achieve. During breaks by the open hearth they ponder over death, temptation and the fatality of their lives. The stories and conversations flow into dreams; past and future merge.

Streuvelds is the Tolstoy of the Lowlands. Magisterial.

DAVID VAN REYBROUCK

In the course of the story the characters become aware of the essence of human existence, which is characterised by loneliness and transience, longing and disillusion, injustice and poverty, fate and hardship. In the morning, they awake, not only from their slumber but also from the illusion that the future still has something to offer: banal, inevitable life awaits.

The story gives an inimitable description of the monotony and finiteness of life against the backdrop of a drunken, nocturnal atmosphere in which dream and reality are masterfully interwoven. With this novella, bathed in a magic-realistic atmosphere, Streuvelds has written one of the loveliest short stories in Dutch literature.

Unparalleled beauty of language, literature of the highest order

DE MORGEN

Het leven en
de dood in den ast



STIJN STREUVELS

LANNOO

AUTHOR



Stijn Streuvels (1871-1969) worked as a baker before becoming a writer. He was self-educated and read and spoke several languages, including French, English, German, Danish and Russian. Along with Cyriel Buysse and Felix Timmermans, Streuvels is one of Flanders' naturalistic novelists. He wrote many regional novels set against a backdrop of farming life that, more than a century later, still fascinate modern readers with their lyrical descriptions of nature, the recognisable rural characters and the fateful life events.

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