

The unresolved past of Belgium's colonial struggles

The Rumours

HUGO CLAUS

When René Catrijsse, a man in his twenties who has fought in the Belgian Congo, deserts and returns to his native village of Alegem, no one is genuinely pleased. Alegem is a stifling, closed society of corrupt souls. By his very presence the young man, who has witnessed and committed atrocities in Africa, and has learned how narrow the divide is between civilisation and savagery, disrupts the apparent order.

When deaths in the village increase in number, it's not hard to guess who will be made the scapegoat.

Painter, poet, novelist, playwright: Claus is a true genius in all these fields. 'The Rumours' is the darkest jewel among all his novels.

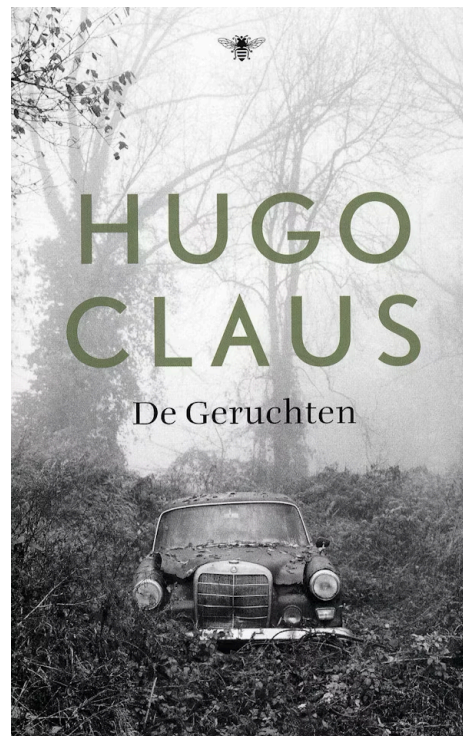
DIE ZEIT

'The Rumours' evokes a panoramic image of 'la Flandre profonde', delving beneath the shiny veneer into the depths of its corruption and violence. Comprehension of the central storyline is hampered by the permanent tension between truth and lie. The seemingly endless chaotic shifts in perspectives perfectly illustrate how the mechanism of rumours works: they start leading a life of their own and can even, in their most absurd cohesion, reach a disastrous conclusion.

All this is presented by Claus in a playful style, as if we were reading not a dramatic allegory but a juicy village chronicle.

The text radiates a delight in writing

DE MORGEN



AUTHOR



Hugo Claus (1929-2008) is Flanders' most famous and most important writer of modern literature. He is internationally acclaimed for his plays, novels and poetry. *Photo © Stephan Vanfleteren*

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